

CONSULTATION SERVICES FOR
SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AT
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION: WESTERN CAPE: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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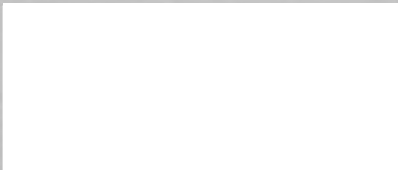
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DECEMBER 1997

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DECLARATION

I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE RESEARCH COMPRISING THIS THESIS IS MY OWN ORIGINAL WORK. THIS WORK HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED EITHER IN PART OR COMPLETELY TO ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY TO OBTAIN THIS DEGREE.



05 February 1998
DATE

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study relating to consultation for social work supervisors in the Department of Social Services, Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, in performing the supervisory function was undertaken. The relative absence of specific literature, research results and a written policy pertaining to consultation in social work, as well as deficiencies in social work practice relating to the inefficient utilisation of consultation prompted this particular study, as a contribution to both the social work profession and the service agency involved. An empirical study based on the literature study was performed on a test sample comprising four service offices of the Department of Social Services in the Cape Metropolitan area.

The empirical study examined and described the existing system of consultation in the Department of Social Services and the respondents opinions, attitudes, knowledge and shortcomings in this regard. The data collected, by means of interview schedules, described the utilisation and application of consultation in social work in the Department of Social Services in order to have a conception of variables which is proposed as a guide for action.

Consultation in social work is important for the performance of the supervisory function. In fulfilling the supervisory function effectively, the social work supervisors should receive consultation on a regular basis as regular feedback or evaluation to social work supervisors is important in order for them to assess their performance and progress. As an aspect of the more inclusive concept of staff development consultation also aims at improving working conditions of social work supervisors, thereby preventing the extensions of ineffective service rendering.

The study also provided information on the theory of consultation in social work on the one hand and on the other hand suggested guidelines for developing and formulating policy for consultation in social work. It is, however, important that the proposed actions of the study are implemented in order to determine the effectiveness thereof.

OPSOMMING

'n Verkennde studie is onderneem oor konsultasie vir maatskaplike werk supervisors in die Departement van Maatskaplike Dienste tydens die uitvoering van die supervisie funksie. Die gebrek aan spesifieke literatuur, navorsings resultate en 'n geskrewe beleid ten opsigte van konsultasie in maatskaplike werk, asook die leemtes in maatskaplike werk praktyk met betrekking tot die ondoeltreffende benutting van konsultasie het aanleiding gegee tot hierdie tesis ten einde 'n bydrae te lewer vir beide die maatskaplike werk professie en die betrokke dienslewering instansie. 'n Empiriese studie gegrond op die literatuur studie is gedoen ten opsigte van 'n steekproef bestaande uit vier dienskantore van die Departement van Maatskaplike Dienste in die Kaapse Metropolitaanse area.

Die empiriese studie het die bestaande sisteem van konsultasie in die Departement van Maatskaplike Dienste en die respondente se opinies, houdings, kennis en leemtes ondersoek en beskryf. Die data wat ingesamel is, by wyse van onderhoud vraelyste, het die benutting en toepassing van konsultasie in maatskaplike werk in die Departement van Maatskaplike Dienste beskryf ten einde 'n beskouing van veranderlikes te hê wat as riglyn vir aksie kan dien.

In die uitvoering van die supervisie funksie, is konsultasie vir maatskaplike werk supervisors belangrik. Maatskaplike werk supervisors moet dus op 'n gereelde basis konsultasie ontvang ten einde die supervisie funksie doeltreffend uit te voer.angesien gereelde terugvoering of evaluasie aan maatskaplike werk supervisors belangrik is so dat hulle hul werkverrigting en vordering kan bepaal. Konsultasie in maatskaplike werk as 'n aspek van die meer insluitende konsep van personeelontwikkeling het ook ten doel om die werksomstandighede van maatskaplike werk supervisors te verbeter ten einde daardeur die verlenging van ondoeltreffende dienslewering te voorkom.

Hierdie studie het ook aan die een hand inligting oor die teorie van konsultasie in maatskaplike werk voorsien en aan die ander hand riglyne vir die ontwikkeling en formulering van 'n beleid vir konsultasie in maatskaplike werk, voorgestel. Verder is dit belangrik dat die voorgestelde aksies van die studie wel toegepas word ten einde die doeltreffendheid daarvan te kan bepaal.

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CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Since the researcher has been employed as a social worker in 1989 he has been exposed to the activities of supervision and observed the supervisory approach employed by supervisors and how social workers reacted to this approach. This experience consequently gave cause to the identification of supervisory needs and shortcomings in the Department of Social Services (Provincial Administration of the Western Cape; hereinafter referred to as the Department) which may be linked to the supportive system available for supervisors i.e. consultation.

The shortcomings of a distinct framework for a system of consultation in practice clearly became evident during 1995 when the researcher started a course on supervision at the University of Stellenbosch. This is also evident in the obscurity that exists about how consultation is experienced by social work supervisors within the Department.

In determining how supervisors keep abreast of the expectations of social workers and to obtain a clearer perspective of the current stance and utilisation of social work consultation within the Department, Kadushin's (1977:19) criteria were applied, namely, the recapitulation of the recent articles devoted to consultation which have appeared in the social work literature; a review of the extent of formal education for consultation in the curriculum of schools of social work, and a summary of recent advertisements for social work consultants.

According to Kadushin's (1977:19) findings, social work literature fails to reflect an interest in social work consultation. Pretorius (1991:3) stated further that no articles relating to consultation have been published in the South African Social Work Journals recently, including no advertisements for social work consultants. In the writer's own experience it is quite remarkable that one comes across obscurity relating to social work consultation amongst supervisors who are in effect accountable and responsible for the staff development function that includes orientation of new social workers, in-service training, supervision and consultation.

In this regard Kadushin's (1977:23) statement, "The current situation, as suggested by professional degree programs, personnel ads, and the periodical literature, indicates that consultation as a social work process is, as yet, a matter of limited interest and concern to the profession", is evident of the shortcomings that exist in practice and in particular in the Department.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Whilst the purpose of supervision according to Kadushin (1992:23) is to equip social workers with the necessary administrative, educational and supportive skills the researcher's experience is that supervisors (in the Department of Social Services) are unable or tend to neglect to deal with social workers' emotional needs (anxieties, frustrations, etc.) emanating from the rapid socio-political and economic changes in the country. Coupled with that there are requirements such as transformation, transparency, participative management, etc. which supervisors are unable to grapple with. In view of the above facts one can conclude that such supervisors fail to attain their ultimate objective to deliver to social workers the best possible service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in accordance with agency policies and procedures (Kadushin 1992:23).

In order to understand the impact on social workers, we need to look into the supervisors supportive system e.g. consultation to see if it empowers them to deal with the needs of the social workers whom they supervise. It is a known fact that consultation in this regard is based upon Departmental policies and procedures and also in the way in which each supervisor interprets the above-mentioned. The data of this study will hopefully reveal the nature and frequency of the accessibility of consultation services for social work supervisors; supervisors abilities to effectively utilise consultation for themselves; nature of supervisors' needs in respect of consultation, and supervisors' attitudes toward consultation. Guidelines about consultation, specifically regarding the knowledge, skills and qualities of consultants in social work are thus needed for the Department of Social Services.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study is to propose guidelines for a system of consultation in the Department of Social Services for social work supervisors. Towards achieving this aim the following objectives will be pursued:

- 1.3.1 To explore and describe the state of consultation in accordance with current literature.
- 1.3.2 To investigate the nature and methods of the existing system of consultation in the Department of Social Services.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

For purposes of this investigation, a literature and empirical study will be undertaken which will serve to orientate the writer and increase insight into the subject. The methods whereby the study will be undertaken is outlined below.

1.4.1 The survey method as research strategy

The descriptive survey method based on questionnaires and interviews will be undertaken to execute this study.

According to Leedy (1974:80) the descriptive survey method consists of distinctive characteristics in that it is a technique of observation as the principal means of collecting the data, it comprises of the carefully chosen, clearly defined and specifically delimited population of the study, information gathered through this method is potentially biased, and although it relies upon observation for the acquisition of data, it consists of organised and systematically presented data so that valid and accurate conclusions may be drawn from them.

In accordance with this study's objectives, the researcher endorses Babbie's (1991:90) statement that it is especially these aspects such as the demographic characteristics, social environment activities, opinions and attitudes of a specific group of persons, i.e. supervisors, that can be studied completely and meaningfully. Thus the assumption that any aspect of human behaviour can be studied through a descriptive survey method, is relevant.

Mouton and Marais (1989:43) stated that the aims with such an exploration are divergent to gain new insights about the domain phenomenon; to be utilised as a preliminary study to a more structured study of the phenomenon; to explain central concepts and models; to determine priorities for further studies, and to develop new hypothesis

about the existing phenomenon. Due to the fact that the researcher is exploring a relatively unknown area, i.e. a policy on a system of consultation, a non-experimental, exploratory study will be applied, which is directed at the acquisition of insight and obtaining an understanding of the issue at hand.

Therefore in view of the above-mentioned aims the descriptive survey method is regarded as the most suitable for the purpose of this study. The researcher is confronted with a situation whereby little objective information about the nature of the problem is available.

1.4.2 Literature study

For purposes of this research an extensive literature review was undertaken. Literature indirectly related to the subject was found in order to explore consultation in general and specifically in relation to social work. Only few primary and secondary resources have been identified through a preliminary computer-aided literature search. The author and title catalogue of the Erica Theron-reading room of the Department of Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch has also been consulted to identify further resources. The resource lists of different international articles served as a further literature source of reference.

1.4.3 Empirical study

The empirical study described the process of data gathering based on the nature, extent, and the sample of the study as well as the processing of the data collected.

1.4.3.1 Nature of the study

The aim and objectives of this study makes the utilisation of qualitative data possible to describe the social reality and to study a relatively unknown area relevant to this study. This is further described by Saxe and Fine's (1981:112) intention that qualitative data "... are the open-ended narratives provided by respondents of their perceptions, thoughts, and feelings" which is relevant to this study. Quantitative methods were applied in this study to count and control the occurrence of specified features and to gather data from a considerable number of persons with the help of interview schedules and to obtain statistics from the data gathered.

1.4.3.2 Range of the study

The study was done at only four offices of the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, Department of Social Services based in the Cape Metropolitan area in order to get a more representative sample. The following offices are requested in writing to take part in the study:

- Cape Town service office
- Bellville service office
- Mitchells Plain service office
- Wynberg service office

1.4.3.3 Test sample

Due to the fact that social work supervisors are responsible for the control and care function of the application of supervision and consultation, this study was limited to social work supervisors of the Department of Social Services.

The researcher purposefully chose this level of personnel for inclusion in the study as argued above and the technique of purposeful sampling was utilised to obtain the test sample. According to Babbie (1991:120) purposeful sampling is appropriate, especially when the universe is known to the researcher and the components of the universe are selected due to the fact that the subject of study should be well known to the respondents.

The criteria constituted for the purposeful sampling of respondents were that respondents must be social work supervisors and that interviews to be conducted with at least two respondents from each office as indicated in the range of the study i.e. 8 respondents in total.

1.4.3.4 Methods of the study

The permission to undertake this study and to request the co-operation of all those implicated in it will be obtained through means of correspondence and personal, telephone calls to the Departmental Head Office and to service office heads.

The interview schedules utilised include both structured as well as unstructured questions, allowing for a motivation by respondents, in questions where greater depth is desirable. In this way facts are sought, and opinions given will be tested. The interview schedule is divided into eight sections. The researcher decided to conduct personal interviews which will be more advantageous as they will attain higher response rates than mailed self-administered questions (Grinnell 1993:267 and Babbie 1991:269). The main advantages are originality, spontaneity, flexibility, control over the environment and the respondents willingness to participate. The respondents willingness to participate in this study is thus of paramount importance in order to obtain the data required.

The interview schedules for purposes of this study was formulated only in English (Annexure 2). The researcher conducted personal interviews according to the interview schedules. All interviews were audio-taped so as to provide accurate information for evaluation. Face-to-face interviews encourage respondents to willingly participate in interviews. (Grinnell 1993:268).

1.4.3.5 Data processing

Data obtained from the interview schedules were analysed by the researcher. For purposes of this study, tables and figures were utilised to facilitate the interpretation of the findings. Frequencies and achievements were also calculated for all the variables.

1.5 DURATION OF THE INVESTIGATION

Preparation for the investigation commenced early in 1996. This involved a study of a literature on the subject of consultation in social work and thereafter the compilation of the question schedules. The fieldwork at the aforementioned four service offices of the Department, will be carried out during March/April 1997. The investigation, including the compilation of this report which will be completed in June 1997.

1.6 DESIGN OF THE INVESTIGATION

After the Introduction **Chapter 1**, the research report will comprise of an additional 6 chapters.

In **Chapter 2**, the emphasis is on the Department's nature, aims and functions especially its personnel management and training functions. This information will provide the context within which the practice of consultation occurs and is evaluated.

Chapters 3 and 4 will provide information on the process of consultation. Where **Chapter 3** will particularly describe the process as it unfolds in the beginning phase. The consultation process is further discussed in **Chapter 4** which include the middle- and termination phase, evaluation of the consultation process and general problems with consultation. **Chapter 5** describes the perspectives of a policy for consultation in social work for application in the Department of Social Services. **Chapter 6** is the empirical section and includes an introduction and analysis of the collected data.

The conclusions and recommendations are discussed in **Chapter 7**.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE WESTERN CAPE): AIMS AND FUNCTIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Whilst the Department engaged in a transformation process which advocates fundamental change in policy at commencement of this research, it is envisaged that discussions will focus on the processes which contributed to the motivation of this study.

As most social work practices take place within an organisational context a brief description of the Department's nature and aims will be given. This description will include consideration of the structure and functions of middle and top management personnel such as social work supervisors. Included in the discussion of the functions of the said management personnel is the Department's systems of in-service training, supervision, consultation and staff development, and the manner in which they interlink.

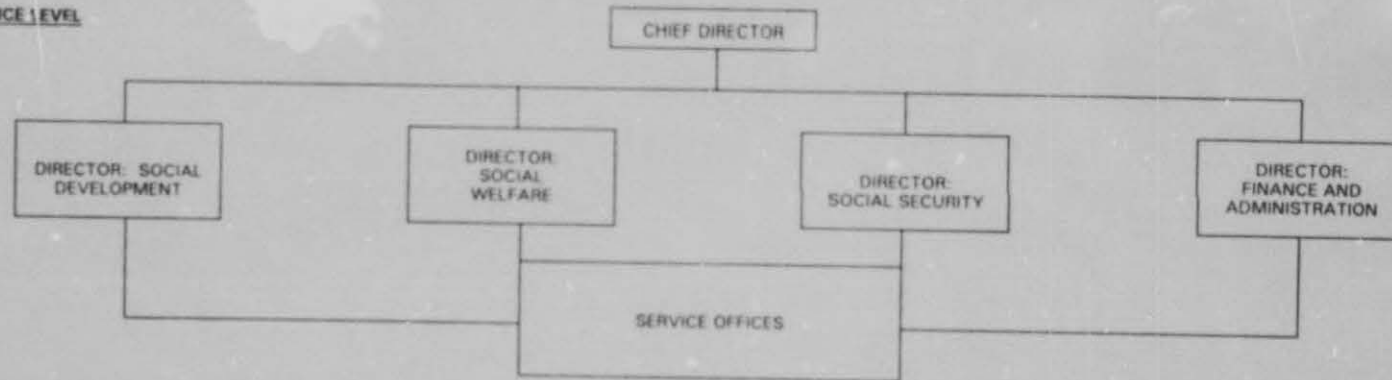
2.2 NATURE AND AIMS OF THE DEPARTMENT

The Department is large in size as it comprises a central controlling head office and 14 decentralised service offices. Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the organogram of the Department of Social Services component which gives an indication of the size and complex nature of the Department's structure. All service offices comprise sections staffed by professionally qualified social workers and are accountable to supervisors who, in turn, are accountable to office heads. The nature of the sections and the nature of their primary activities are listed in table 2.1.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION: WESTERN CAPE (PAWC)

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

(a) HEAD OFFICE LEVEL



(b) SERVICE OFFICE LEVEL

1. ATHLONE
2. ATLANTIS
3. BEAUFORT WEST
4. BELLVILLE
5. CAPE TOWN
6. GEORGE
7. KHAYELITSHA
8. MITCHELLS PLAIN
9. OUDTSHOORN
10. PAARL
11. PIKETBERG
12. VREDENDAL
13. WORCESTER
14. WYNBERG

FIGURE 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

TABLE 2.1: PRIMARY NATURE OF ACTIVITIES RELATIVE TO DIFFERENT DIRECTORATES OF SERVICE OFFICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

DIRECTORATE	PRIMARY NATURE OF ACTIVITIES
Social Development	Policy planning, research Intersectoral co-ordination Population development
Developmental Social Welfare	Child and family care Age and disabled Offender services, substance abuse care Institutional and community based care
Social Security	Social pensions
Finance	Subsidies Financial management
Administration	Administration Labour relation Human resource planning Human resource training Management information systems

In view of Table 2.1 the above directorates in the Department of Social Services perform various activities which impact on the service delivery system of the Department of Social Services. In this regard the Directorate Social Development's staff execute activities which are directed at promoting integrated sustainable social development and change based on community needs and initiatives in order to develop people and to address the root causes of poverty. Social Welfare Services are rendered by social workers in the Directorate Developmental Social Welfare to those target groups in need of welfare services. Social pensions, grants, etc. are provided to beneficiaries by the social security section based on valid applications. The other two components, Finance and Administration provide basic support services to both public and private structures in terms of material or physical assistance. Thus in view of the preceding information it is evident that the Department of Social Services' operations complies with that of a bureaucratic institution.

Furthermore, supervisors in the respective Directorates, provide educational supervision to and exercise administrative control over all social workers who are accountable to their respective supervisors. A hierarchical system of control exists with office heads

at the top, chief social workers/supervisors in the middle and direct service workers (social workers) providing the up front service. This form of organisational structure is generally known as a "bureaucracy". Various authors, amongst whom are Weinbach (1994:52-53) and Kadushin (1992:44-45) described bureaucracies as having characteristics of a vertical organisational hierarchy based on official position rather than the individuality of the incumbent; well-defined guidelines that limit functions of these positions; promotion and other rewards are based on demonstrated technical competence; communication channels that are formal and rigid; a clear-cut and highly specialised division of labour; impersonal social relations with management based on written documentation and; job security for full-time employees.

In comparing the nature of the Department with the afore-mentioned characteristics of bureaucracies, it definitely tend to be structured and incorporate some of these characteristics. Clearly without knowledge of the characteristics of the bureaucratic model, social work supervisors will be severely disadvantaged, because they will not know how the organisation functions and how to organise the work of their respective sections within this structure. In this regard no negative connotation should be attached to the term "bureaucracy" for it is being used technically to describe one of several possible forms of organisational structure so as to make it possible to retain control over large numbers of people and their activities (Weinbach, 1994:53).

The aim of the Department is generally to promote the provision of social services geared towards assessment, evaluation and utilisation of social work methods i.e. case, group and community work so as to enhance the quality of life of all people. The activities of the service offices can be regarded as a combination of both professional and administrative services pertinent to social work specifically and social welfare generally. Towards this end, social workers provide casework, group work and community work services. Middle management personnel, that is, social work supervisors, fulfill the educational, supportive and administrative functions of supervision in an effort to ensure an adequate direct worker service from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. The supervisor's role is thus, primarily, an indirect service role.

2.3 THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

For purposes of this study, the discussion that follows will focus on the relevant personnel in the Department of Social Services and the responsibilities and authority attached to their roles.

2.3.1 The structure

Each service office, depending on its size comprises of professional management personnel i.e. office heads, social work supervisors and social workers.

The Office head is responsible for the effective management of the service office as a whole. Social Work supervisors are responsible for managing social workers and is directly accountable to the office head. A hierarchical system of management can, therefore, be seen to exist. Each division in the office has specific supervisors who are responsible for all of the supervisory and consultative responsibilities in the division managed by them only.

2.3.2 The functions

Office Heads, accountable to Head Office, are responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of all offices within their respective service areas. **Social Work supervisors** are responsible for ensuring the effective functioning of social workers. Towards this end, supervisors perform functions of education, support and administration (Departmental Manual: Middle Management: 1991).

With regards to supervisors' **educational** functional abilities learning and teaching are ongoing processes that are also pursued after the completion of in-service training, and that the learning and teaching is primarily concerned with the application of theory in practice with the ultimate aim of an effective service to clients. The responsibility for such learning and teaching are primarily supervisors'.

The **supportive** function of supervisors implies that a high degree of emotion is inherent in social work practice and workers need assistance to cope with and prevent tension and emotional exhaustion. Thus to provide support to the social workers, for example to remove the worker temporarily from a stressful situation to assist the worker to gain

a better perspective of the situation thereby preventing emotional burnout and obviating the development of feelings of depression, guilt, unattainability etc.

In view of the **administrative** function the departmental requirements regarding the administrative functions of the supervisor are elaborate. These administrative functions include orientating the new worker to organisational structure and functioning, liaising between worker and departmental management personnel, providing leadership, conducting casework discussions, exercising control of work and planning supervision programs.

Furthermore, the analysis of duty sheets indicate that the nature of supervisors management responsibilities are clear, i.e. planning, organising, motivating, co-ordinating, controlling, and supervisory functions (Departmental Guide: 1991). However from a practical point of view, although social workers are responsible for providing the service, they are accountable to and dependent upon their supervisors for much of the decision-making and other activities carried out in the execution of every day tasks.

2.3.3 Use of authority

In view of the fact that the organisation assigns full responsibility to supervisors for the control of the administrative responsibilities of workers, the degree of supervisory control relevant to professional decision-making occurring during the processes of supervision and consultation for workers is, however based upon the writer's evaluation not clearly spelled out by the Department, that is, its policy in this regard lacks clarity.

The actual situation in the Department is that supervisors' authority generally stem from their position in the administrative hierarchy and not from their knowledge or their personalities. The degree to which supervisors use their position to control and influence the decision-making of workers is left to the discretion of each supervisor. Authority in this regard is based on the centralisation of hierarchical authority according to the Bureaucratic Model (Weinbach 1994:52). Furthermore, office heads' understanding of the nature and extent of supervisors' authority is likely to affect the manner in which their leadership generally and their decision-making specifically is practised, and the way in which they hold supervisors and workers accountable, that is, how they practice accountability.

2.3.4 Communication

The size and the nature of a particular organisation will play a major role in determining the forms of communication existing between members of the work-force. In large, bureaucratic organisations such as the one under discussion, communication is usually in written form and takes place primarily from the top echelons down to the bottom and vice versa. Office heads communicate downwards to supervisors, whilst supervisors usually communicate upwards to office heads and downwards to social workers. Direct communication between office heads and social workers is an exception to the rule. This is the most economical form of communication from the organisation's point of view as this form of communication makes it possible to retain control over large numbers of people and their activities.

2.4 THE DEPARTMENT'S SYSTEMS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Department's systems of staff development include separate programs of in-service training, supervision and consultation which are interrelated.

2.4.1 In-service training

The practice of **in-service training**, as an activity of staff development, in the Department is usually done by means of supervision, more specifically, educational supervision. Consultation usually takes place with workers who have been subjected to the formal educational function of supervision which was practised as an aspect of in-service training. The supervisors are, however, subjected to a prospectus which consists of a variety of training courses directed at functional training needs i.e. knowledge and skills linked to the execution of daily activities; management training needs i.e. junior-, middle-, senior- and project management courses, etc.; computer training needs that include an introduction course, Windows, Word, Excel, Access and Powerpoint, and individual/other training needs i.e. orientation, skills training, etc.

Where the focus of training in the past has essentially been on the development and presentation of training material, according to a prospectus dated April 1991 issued by the Provincial Administration: Western Cape, Directorate Training, the shift in emphasis has been toward a greater recognition of training as a change agent. In pursuit of this objective, the role of line management will be crucial if the impact of training is to be felt, as they are ultimately responsible for the implementation of change in the work

place. Further, greater attention will also be paid to empowering employees at the longer echelons of the organisation in the endeavour to build capacity and in so doing, enabling them to play an even greater role in the future of the Department of Social Services. In this regard in-service training contributes to the enhancing of skills and knowledge as well as the shaping of attitudes of workers at every level in the Department of Social Services.

It is important that the form of the in-service training provided is in accordance with the principles, techniques, methods, and aims of continued professional development. Presently the Department assumes responsibility for enabling workers to promote their professional development by providing the means for staff development by which both professional training and development take place through seminars, workshops and studies for advanced degrees.

2.4.2 Supervision

Although no clear policy with regards to the system of supervision exists within the Department, supervisors do perform functions of education, support and administration as explained under section 2.3.2. Generally the emphasis is primarily on the administration of these functions and with instructions and procedural guidelines regarding the content, duration and frequency of activities such as planned supervisory sessions. It is also important to note that within the Department of Social Services, "supervise" is a relative concept to social workers. The Department of Social Services however, has also no detailed procedural instructions for supervisors for the implementation of their supervisory responsibilities and the interpretation thereof needs to be confirmed or repudiated by the Department in guidelines or handbooks, for such an interpretation has implications for the supervisory role of the supervisor.

2.4.3 Consultation

The nature of consultation within the Department is determined by the relationship between supervisors and office head which implies that the position of the supervisor in the organisational hierarchy forms the basis of the way the supervisor's function is affected by this relationship. A different relationship between workers and supervisors implies that the position of supervisors form the basis of their authority inherent in their role as opposed to the role of consultant which affects the professional decision-making of the independent worker.

In any event all workers who are considered to be independent practitioners subject to a consultant/consultee relationship in so far as their education is concerned, are subject to administrative supervision i.e. to supervisory control of their activities and to the evaluation of their work.

The above has implications for supervisors subject to consultant/consultee relationship in so far as their supervisory responsibilities are concerned in empowering them to address the needs of workers. However the practice of consultation on this level is unclear. The perspectives of a policy for consultation in social work for application in the Department is considered in greater detail in Chapter 5.

2.5 PERSONNEL EVALUATION

The evaluation system involves regular assessment of how workers perform their duties, which is explained in the form of incidents and duty sheets.

Workers must describe incidents illustrating how well they execute tasks allocated in terms of their duty sheets. Workers are responsible to keep incidents up to date, and supervisors must evaluate them in terms of specific norms as outlined in the Departmental manual: Personnel Evaluation (1991:8-9) issued by the Directorate Training, PAWC. There are two types of norms. Firstly there are general norms which refers to general characteristics which can be measured against general norms e.g. neatness, punctuality, etc., i.e. norms which apply to all workers in the public service, e.g. it is expected of a satisfactory worker to adhere to punctually working hours, and not only to be late in exceptional circumstances. Secondly specific norms are norms which do not apply to everyone, but are limited to the post and rank you occupy e.g. post and task norms. Post norms refers to the post in which the person finds himself, i.e. that which is expected of you on the basis of the post that you occupy. Task norms are more specific and are based on your rank and the work that you do. Three systems that are mainly utilised by the Department of Social Services are Personnel assessment, Merit awards and Special awards.

The purpose of **personnel assessment** is to evaluate workers' performances in view of promotion to a higher rank. During assessment, the requirements of the higher rank serve as a norm of workers achievements. In view of the **merit and special awards**, workers are encouraged to utilise their initiative for improving the Department's efficiency and effectiveness whereby they are awarded special acknowledgement by way of a cash sum/bonus and meritorius mention.

The effective control of the evaluation system relies on the evaluation of workers' performances being adequately documented with examples of workers characteristics and behaviour. This enables a norm to be determined at a later stage of the process by the merit committee.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provides perspectives on the nature of the organisation within which the practice of Departmental consultation for supervisors ought to take place. The structure and functioning of personnel and the application of the systems of teaching and training of personnel were examined.

Concepts relating to the nature, structure and functioning of the organisation and its personnel were discussed including the aspects of bureaucracy, the functions of supervision, the application of authority, the practice of communication and the practice of consultation.

The Department is undoubtedly bureaucratic in nature with elaborate systems of management, education and training for personnel of various hierarchical levels in particular for the middle management and direct service worker level. Procedures for supervisor and management responsibilities are not as clearly defined as are procedures for direct service workers.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IN SOCIAL WORK: THE BEGINNING PHASE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of consultation has been defined by the human service professions in a variety of ways, but common aspects, applicable to social work practice can be extracted and described. As a social work concept, consultation is a professional interaction between two or more persons, that respects the integrity and competence of the consultee and the knowledge of the consultant, who is expert in a particular area and on a specific problem that the consultee is experiencing. According to Schulman (1995:2373) the consultation in this regard should be problem-focused and centered on the consultee's professional role and the consultant's knowledge and skills are directed towards exploring and understanding the problem situation itself, and are also directed toward understanding the consultee's dilemma in dealing with it.

Furthermore consultation in social work progresses according to a fixed **process** consisting of various phases wherein the relationship and interaction between the consultant and consultee is clearly manifested, irrespective of whether the consultant is an employee within the agency context or somebody from outside the agency, or a combination of both. Each phase also consists of specific characteristics and tasks which distinguish it from other phases.

The type of consultation utilised can influence the process to a certain extent. Consultation in social work practice can be classified according to the following basic types:

- Firstly, the type of consultation which involves a social work expert consultant, such as the agency supervisor, and a worker-consultee, following his graduation to consultation. The focus of this type of consultation could be client-oriented and also focusing on the worker's administrative performance (Austin 1981:113-116 and Kadushin 1977:70-74).

- Secondly, another type of consultation in an agency involves a supervisor in the role of consultee. This amounts basically to consultation on the supervisor's practice performance, and both the individual and the group conference settings can be utilised (Kadushin 1977:ix-x, 30-31).
- Thirdly, consultation in social work practice can involve a consultant from outside a given social welfare agency, consulting either with a supervisor, or directly with a worker (Westheimer 1977:161-162).
- The fourth type of consultation concerns a social worker who himself acts as a consultant in a host setting, for example, as a member of a multi-disciplinary team in a hospital, a school, or in court (Kadushin 1977:6-10).

For consultation to be implemented purposefully it is necessary that on the one hand a policy for consultation in social work stipulates the components of the process, and on the other hand senior personnel must have knowledge about the process of consultation. Although the process is divided into four to seven phases by different writers (Green 1965:426-427; Kadushin 1977:91-182; Lippitt & Lippitt 1977:131-135; Parsons & Meyers 1985:99-121 and Steinberg 1989:43-56), the content coincide commonly and they all follow a process. The process of consultation in social work is subsequently explained in detail with specific reference to the beginning, middle and termination phase as well as the evaluation of the consultation process.

3.2 THE BEGINNING PHASE

The beginning phase will focus on the contact initiation, choice of consultant, motives for consultation, pre-entry and entry issues in consultation, contracting, and problems in the beginning phase.

3.2.1 Contact initiation

Contact can usually be initiated by various possible parties. The **organisation or agency**, having identified a need for consultation then seeks a consultant whose specialised expertise relates to the identified need. Consultation can also be requested if the consultee has for example a need to increase productivity and not necessarily when a problem is identified.

Consultants can also reach out to supervisors which are probable potential candidates for consultation so as to motivate and stimulate them. Such a reach out according to Lippitt & Lippitt (1977:131) can also be linked with merely the recruiting of new job opportunities, or because another consultee with common problems has been helped by the consultant.

The **community or a third party** may also initiate consultation. Lippitt & Lippitt (1977:131) perceives this initiator as someone "... who perceives a need for help in a client system, and who is aware of the skills and resources available in the way of consultation". Thus the need and resources are brought into contact with each other. The initiation by a third party may merely be only a proposal which is followed up through a formal meeting between the third party, the consultant and the potential client (consultee). If the third party is a dynamic influential person, he/she can then for example consult a consultant about the fundraising component of an organisation merely because he/she decided that a consultant can resolve the problem. If the community requests consultation, the foster parents of a child and family welfare organisation, as the community to whom a service is rendered, can for example request that a child psychologist as consultant be approached to address certain problems.

During this phase of contact, clear motives for consultation are given, and objectives are set when selecting a suitable consultant. It also implies that any person who can identify a need can take the initiative to investigate the possibility of consultation.

3.2.2 Choice of Consultant

In deciding on the use of consultation puts considerable responsibility on the agency to find someone appropriate. Kadushin (1977:101) indicates that agencies struggle to decide upon whether to use internal consultants or consultants from outside the agency as on the one hand the outside consultant brings some special advantages and on the other hand as indicated by Lippitt & Lippitt (1977:43), "The internal consultant is part of the client system and therefore may well be part of the problem". Since the internal consultant is part of the organisation the consultant has the problem of achieving credibility as a consultant which point to the central disadvantage of the internal consultant.

Although the consultant as person is a strong factor, the problem or need that needs to be addressed through consultation will be decisive in the choice of a consultant. The

considerations such as the nature of the problem; time and remuneration; whether it is important for the consultant to be aware of your particular type of work (supervision to social workers, etc.) and if so what level of specialist knowledge is required, or whether a "generalist" approach is acceptable; whether the consultant needs specific knowledge or skills; the criteria on which the consultant's suitability will be assessed and whether you want to contact only one consultant, or talk to several before deciding, as indicated in the Management Consultancy Guidelines (1982:158), will also play a role in the choice of a consultant.

3.2.3 Motives for Consultation

The way contact is made depends to some extent on the reason(s) why consultation is requested. The principal primary motive for consultation is the need for help with a work-related problem" (Kadushin 1997:102). Thus consultation is given in response to a request to the consultant from the professional (consultee) for help with a problem in the practice of the consultee. However consultation has also secondary motives in the nature of "hidden agendas". The use of an outside consultant for help in dealing with work-related problems, for example where social work supervisors are getting ineffective support from executive management to address direct-service workers needs, is seen by Kadushin (1977:103) as someone that is objective and impartial and "... no axe of his own to grind". Here the status of the consultant as an outsider is very important. Thus, in policy conflicts between social work supervisors and significant subgroups in the organisation, consultation is requested in the hope that results can be used to support the supervisors' position.

Another secondary motive can be hidden in the report which the consultant present to justify the changes in the agency's policy to the community. A consultant may also be employed or consulted to share the emotional burden of making a difficult decision, for example where the executive management is requested to adapt their management style to the needs of supervisors so as to provide effective support, the support and confirmation of the decision by a consultant is a relief for the consultee. Kadushin (1977:103) is of the opinion that the agency, although aware of what it wants to do, may need "... somebody else whose opinion they respect to tell them that it is a good, desirable thing to do". The onus for the decision is then partially the responsibility of the consultant.

Engaging in consultation so as to delay a decision may also be another motive. Rather than accepting and handling the problem the agency may request consultation. According to Kadushin (1977:103) the supervisor or agency "has a valid, sanctioned reason for tabling the problem for a time". When supervisors at an organisation for example request for a more effective support system, the executive management can refer it to a management meeting for a decision who on their accord appoint a committee. This committee may then decide to hire a consultant to investigate the problem/need. Thus the decision can be further delayed by the consultant's investigation. The employing of a consultant has sometimes been cited as one of a series of delaying tactics in avoiding a decision.

Consultation may also be requested for achieving another goal than to gain expert knowledge. The consultant may have a relationship with or access to, some resource in which the consultee agency is interested, for example a resource group or a funding agency.

Directors of agencies who are often the most isolated persons in the agency may utilise consultation as they may have needs to discuss their problems with an expert, an objective outsider. The director can according to Kadushin (1977:104) talk freely to the consultant without worrying about how this will affect the complicated network of relationships in the agency. Consultants thus provide a non-competitive, professional relationship with directors.

In the case of newly developed projects, employment of high-status consultants implies that the prestige of the consultant's profession is higher in the public image than that of the profession which the agency represents. Consultation may thus be utilised for its prestige value. This consideration may motivate the organisation to arrange for consultation.

Supervisors and social workers often may also have their own personal idiosyncratic motives for consultation in addition to, or in substitution of, motives related to problem-solving. Consultation may for example be requested by workers for guidance in dealing with difficult clients to share the responsibility for a difficult decision or to abdicate responsibility for the case. In this case consultation may be a way for the worker to seek help with his own personal problems or it may be a response to an effort to please a supervisor who is interested in pleasing the consultant.

Although some of these aspects may be termed secondary motives or 'hidden agendas' they are not any less important than the primary motives of consultation. This is not demeaning to the consultant to be used in this way, but the consultant must not permit consultees to manipulate them. Thus consultants must be objective, impartial and professional, as well as sensitive to the nature of agency politics so that they can be aware of how they might be being used. In summary, whatever conclusions the consultee may want, the consultant must be true to the best conclusions (Kadushin 1977:106).

3.2.4 Pre-entry Issues in Consultation

Various writers i.e. Kadushin (1977:108-109); Parsons & Meyers (1984:103-104) and Lee & Freedman (1984:47-51) is of the opinion that it is essential that the consultant evaluate certain aspects before 'entry' and often before any contact is made with the client system. The consultant must evaluate whether consultation is the procedure of choice for dealing with the prevailing situation. Careful consideration of this aspect may lead to the decision that the most desirable alternative is a formal program of in-service training, or more adequate supervision, or upgrading the requirements for entry-level positions rather than providing consultation resources to the staff. Kadushin (1977:108) pertinently stated that consultation is inefficiently employed if it is used as a substitute for supervision or an inadequate in-service training program. It may be that what is needed is an increase in staff rather than in the ability of the current work force to handle more adequately the current caseload through consultation.

If it is decided that consultation is the alternative of choice, particular consultants have to ask themselves further whether they are consultants of choice for this assignment. It may be that the nature of consultants' orientation as to desirable procedures, goals, and objectives is philosophically at decided variance with the prevailing approach of the institution they are asked to serve. Parsons and Meyers (1984:103) is of the opinion that before entry "... the consultant should become familiar with the institution's history, mission, philosophy and procedures before seeking entry ... the knowledge about the organisation will raise the credibility of the consultant's recommendations".

The consultant also has the responsibility of making a decision as to the validity, feasibility, and appropriateness of the consultation. Furthermore consultants must also evaluate whether they have the knowledge and skills to handle this particular problem. Consultants have the right to decide whether they will accept the request and be satis-

fied with the agreement. If uncertain it may lead to unproductive consultation. Thus the problem or need to be handled through consultation must be clearly defined, consultants must know who or what the identified problem is, why consultation is obvious at this stage, the resources available and if they as consultants are, or want to be the right persons for the handling of the problem (Pretorius 1991:88).

Lee and Freedman (1984:51) argue further that observations of consultants at work suggests that these pre-entry questions are rarely articulated explicitly, and failure to do so seems to impede consultant effectiveness. These pre-entry questions of consultation may include for example - should one do consultation in this situation?; whose interests will the consultant serve?; and what will be the primary focus of consultation?.

Thinking through these questions helps the consultant make more rational, coherent choices about many of the issues that may arise during the consultation and minimises much of the ambiguity, conflict, and confusion that interfere with effective intervention. It is thus clear that the consultant must be objective in his decision to get involved after contact with the consultee.

3.2.5 Entry issues in consultation

This aspect of the beginning phase of the consultation process gives the particular parties the opportunity to clear out how they understand and define the problems or needs to change, the potential of the consultant and consultee to work together, and how ready the consultee is for change.

Parsons and Meyers (1984:99-100) qualify these considerations with the statement that entry contain more than just getting access to a building, an office arrange or to present a possible job description and contract. These aspects, although part of a process, is insufficient to establish a working relationship between the consultant and the consultee.

Identification of the need to change implies that the consultant, in co-operation with the consultee, investigate the consultee's understanding of the problem. Information must be obtained about the activities that can contribute to the identification and demarcation of the problem. The emphasis is on the exploration of various aspects.

The consultant ought to utilise this opportunity to get to know the institution and the consultee.

The readiness for change is measured against the consultee's willingness to allow appropriate personnel to link with the problem-solving process and to sacrifice time and energy. The consultee now also has the opportunity to investigate the consultant's potential, skills, sensitivity, understanding and credibility. Thus the potential for the development of a working relationship between the consultant and the consultee is investigated and criticised by both parties. The choice of a consultant, whether internal or external, is essential. Possible problems that can be experienced in the beginning phase herewith will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

3.2.6 Contracting issues in consultation

Some of the problems experienced in the beginning phase with contact and entry can, according to Kadushin (1977:122) and Lippitt and Lippitt (1977:133), be prevented or mitigated by a clearly defined and explained contract. Both parties can already tentatively decide to call off the investigation or to move in the direction of an agreement about the nature, objectives and conditions of a working relationship.

The general description of a contract in social work implies that the contract is a clear, mutual agreement between two or more parties i.e. between consultant and consultee (Brown 1984:41; Kadushin 1977:123; Lee & Freedman 1984:63; Lippitt & Lippitt 1977:133; Schein 1988:1989). The target problems are demarcated specifically in the contract, aims and objectives to be achieved, set, and the planned intervention strategies explained. The contract can also be formal, informal, verbal or written. Kadushin (1977:122) is of the opinion that the contract involves structural, procedural, and psychological aspects. These aspects that do need attention in the consultation contract is an explanation of the goals and objectives of consultation; an indication of the extent to which the goals and objectives will be achieved; evaluation criteria which will indicate whether objectives were achieved; procedures that will be followed in consultation; time frame, frequency and the place where consultation will take place; reimbursement of the consultant; mutual expectations; the consultant's functions; as well as the consultee with and against whom the functions will be executed.

The information and material provided by the consultant to the consultee for preparation of the consultation, must be clearly jotted down. An indication must also be given

about how the consultant will utilise this information and material. Confidentiality, i.e. when and with whom the content and process of consultation will be discussed, must be clearly spelt out beforehand.

Furthermore a contract serve as an active instrument which involve the consultant and the consultee in a meaningful and productive working relationship. It ensures both parties of an immediate involvement, meaningful participation and an indication of mutual dedication and readiness to accept responsibility. A contract also provide a basis for regular review, evaluation of achievements and the inspection of the conditions of the agreement.

3.2.7 Problems in the Beginning phase

The entry of a consultant to an agency presents problems at each level of the agency's hierarchy. For purposes of this study the following discussions will focus on the executive management level and the middle-management supervisory level. Kadushin (1977:111-112) gives a comprehensive explanation of the different problems in accordance with this hierarchical structure.

3.2.7.1 Problem for the executive management

The director of an agency is perceived as representing the agency to the community and is responsible for the integration of the tasks and activities which form part of responsibility areas of management i.e. programme and financial management, personnel management, management of other human resources and work load and office management (Pretorius 1991:92). Apart from this the director is also mainly concerned with policy formulation and management of the agency.

In view of the above-mentioned it is understandable that the director according to Kadushin (1977:111) is likely to feel heightened anxiety in instances where a strange person with the expert knowledge may identify certain shortcomings in the management of the agency. The director thus may feel uneasy if he experienced consultation as an exposed and threatened process.

The director may also possibly have limited professional education, is anxious about his/her competence, and consequently are reluctant to engage in professional interaction where these shortcomings might become obviously apparent. Consultation can

thus let the director suffer from 'status anxiety'. The ability of the consultant to communicate, acceptance, respect, confidentiality and acknowledgement to the director will to a great extent determine the frequency of the occurrence of the said problems.

3.2.7.2 Problems at a middle-management supervisory level

The supervisor who represents the middle-management level of an agency has the initial responsibility for helping the worker with work-related problems. Consequently, the introduction of a consultant might frequently be perceived as potentially competitive and may even be more acute.

Both the consultant and the supervisor are now involved with the worker and are competing for the respect of the worker. The supervisor also responds to the threat of the potential conflict between himself and the consultant instigated by the worker. The worker may attempt to sue the professional authority of the consultant against the administrative authority of the supervisor. Consultation, can thus become an instrument of rivalrous intrigue according to Kadushin (1977:113) which he explained further as follows: "It does a disservice to the worker if the consultant disrupts the relationship between supervisor and worker. The worker is dependent on the continuing relationship with the supervisor for help and support and can only count on this from the consultant on an intermittent basis. The consultant thus has some responsibility to support the administrative and structural relationships of the agency and to enhance the support mechanisms that the worker could get through this or his/her supervisor".

Furthermore the supervisor should help the worker to resolve resistance to consultation which hinder achieving of consultation goals. Supervisors thus also have vital roles to play in controlling feelings mobilised in workers and in themselves as supervisors, by consultation. It is therefore important that supervisors motivate, support and assist workers, and work with consultants and not against them.

The presence of the supervisor in the consultation process can also be advantageous, since the supervisor will have continuing responsibility for helping the worker with the problem situation after the consultant leaves; it would be helpful if the supervisor is familiar with what actually was covered during the consulting session. Such involvement also diminishes the possibility of the development of the triangular, competitive, rivalrous relationship in which the consultee plays off the consultant against the supervisor.

Another advantage is that it may enable the consultant to improve the communication between the supervisor and the worker. The supervisor is also of value to the consultant, as the supervisor is familiar with agency policy and procedures and can therefore advise the consultant and worker on these aspects. Before the supervisor is occupied this opportunity must be discussed with the concerned parties.

3.2.7.3 Consultants' problems

The problems consultants may encounter may emanate from a series of factors which is a direct consequence of the acceptance of a consultation assignment. Since consultants, in accepting the task, know that they are expected to contribute something which their clients lack they are likely to feel considerable obligation to be of value - anxiety about demonstrating their values can stimulate them to rush forward prematurely with information or suggestions.

Various writers (Lee & Freedman 1984:59-62; Lippitt & Lippitt 1977:133; Kadushin 1977:120-122; Parsons & Meyers 1984:100) illustrate these uncertainties and problems as experienced by the consultant. When making initial contact, consultants experience difficulty in determining whether directors, for example, speak for the total organisation, some special interest subgroup, or only behalf of their own vested interests. Lee & Freedman (1984:59) is of the opinion that: "Unless the consultant conceives of the total organisation as the client, he/she becomes vulnerable to being trapped into a special relationship with one subgroup or client system member". Thus when perceived by the rest of the client system, the consultant is likely to experience considerable difficulty in establishing open, productive relationships with other subgroups and with the total client system.

Furthermore the consultant, internal or external will initially be perceived as "an intrusive alien", according to Parsons and Meyers (1984:100). This resistance is attributable to the involvement of a consultant which refers to malfunctioning in the agency and that something or someone must be "corrected" and or change must take place. External consultants often threaten the established relationships and patterns of interaction because their behaviour and attitudes are not known beforehand. The result is an uncertainty by those who will be involved with the consultation as in view of Lee and Freedman's (1984:53) opinion: "... some relationship to this new person must be developed so that the consultant's performance, and the responses of others to it, can be better predicted".

Consultants as strangers may feel uneasy about the fact that while those with whom they will be working know each other and are familiar with the agency's policy, procedures, traditions, structure and operations, they themselves are strangers. This unfamiliarity is according to Kadushin (1977:120) discomfiting and disconcerting. The consultant's ability to be helpful also may be intensified by the recognition that often the most difficult cases and situations are selected for consultation. The consultant's expertise is frequently tested. On the other hand this can be a challenge as consultants recognise the ambivalent responses from consultees who still need consultation to improve their service delivery.

The consultant often operates in a context which provokes anxiety because it is unknown and provide little support. This relates to the contrasting roles in which the consultant may be perceived by agency personnel. The consultant may for example be seen as an ally or community agent by the director and as a competitor or collaborator by supervisors. This strange context contribute to feelings of loneliness, isolation and uncertainty experienced by the consultant.

Although consultants have the problem of controlling some very human reactions to situations frequently, they should be confident of the help they can offer and equally capable of sharing his/her limitations. Knowing some of the answers, consultants must also resist the temptation to believe they have all of the answers. Kadushin (1977:122) emphasise further that the consultant: "... needs to be able to accept the fact that others will receive credit for achievements which derive from her suggestions and advice while she herself may be denied recognition".

The consultant, paid by an agency, is an ambiguous marginal situation. Although temporarily members of the system, they are not fully bonded by agency procedures, dictates or tradition as are other staff members. Internal consultants find themselves in a more difficult situation as consultation is seen as part of their work and that they will receive no extra compensation for it. A clear formulated policy document which requires a contract is very important as it can present such problems (Pretorius 1991:98).

The aspects discussed in this section are some of the problems faced by the principal actors involved in the consultation process. These obstacles are activated by the entry of the consultant. Therefore it is important that these problems are consciously

managed and worked through so as to ensure the effective utilisation of consultation. Less problems will be experienced if some of these aspects are covered in a policy.

3.3 SUMMARY

This chapter was concerned with the steps in the consultation process leading up to the consultation interaction. The various ways of making contact between consultation and consultee were reviewed, some consideration being given to the difference between voluntary and involuntary consultation. The different motives for consultation were outlined as well as the problems encountered by consultants and consultees, as a consequence of consultation. The nature of consultation contracts and content was also discussed. The consultation interaction phase will further be discussed in Chapter 4 including the middle- and termination phase, evaluation of the consultation process and general problems with consultation.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONSULTATION PROCESS IN SOCIAL WORK: THE MIDDLE- AND TERMINATION PHASE, EVALUATION, AND GENERAL PROBLEMS

4.1 THE MIDDLE PHASE

During this phase of the process, the consultant, having been contacted, and granted entry to the agency on some explicit contractual terms, is ready to provide consultation to some designated consultee representing the agency and its service. Furthermore this phase covers aspects such as the working environment in which the consultation takes place, preparation engaged by both consultant and consultee and the action or the working through phase (Kadushin 1977:129-177; Lippitt & Lippitt 1977:133-135; Schein 1988: 131; Towle 1970:209-210).

4.1.1 The work setting in which consultation takes place

The nature of the problem or need which needs to be addressed will determine the setting in which consultation takes place. Schein (1988: 131-133) describe four aspects which play a role in the work environment. The choice of the setting should be worked out collaboratively with the consultee. If observation in the work environment forms part of the consultation process, then both parties share the responsibility in such a decision. The consultant as well as the consultee is the observer in this regard. Schein (1988: 132) is of the opinion that: "Since the participants are themselves the targets of the process interventions, it is essential that they be involved in the decision to try to learn". Both parties involved with the consultation must be motivated and dedicated so as to achieve their goals and objectives through the utilisation of consultation. The work environment should also be as near the management level of the agency or client system as possible. According to Schein (1988: 132) the reasons for this are two-fold.

Firstly the higher the level, the more likely it is that basic norms, values, and goals can be observed in operation. If consultants do not expose themselves to this they are abdicating their own ethical responsibilities. Only if consultants personally accept the

norms, goals, and values of the agency can they justify helping the agency to achieve them.

Secondly the higher the level, the greater the payoff on any changes in process which are achieved. If consultants can advise and guide directors to learn more about organisational process and to change their behaviour accordingly, this change in turn is a force on the middle management which filters through to the social workers. Thus consultants should seek that group of people in the agency which they consider to be *potentially most influential*, and if possible to conduct consultation with them.

Furthermore, the work environment chosen should be one in which it is easy to observe interpersonal and group processes. Thus it is also important to observe the process of communication amongst employees, not only that amongst the individual and the consultant. A staff meeting or some personnel development activity are opportunities where the consultant can easily observe, especially if personnel relationships were the reason for the request for consultation. This in particular should be applied to the Department of Social Service's working environment as the process of communication amongst staff occurs mostly through written communication. Schein (1988: 133) qualify this by stating that observation of the employees must take place where they deal with its other in their usual fashion.

The work environment should also be one in which legitimate work is executed. Consultants should avoid situations where specific interpersonal relations between employees are discussed, as consultants do not yet have enough observational data, and the consultees cannot as yet trust consultants enough to really have an open discussion of interpersonal relations. Regular committee - or work-group meetings are ideal, as the employees can be observed in a more natural role. Thus the consultant also learns what sort of work the employees are concerned about. At later intervention stages it is much easier to link observations to real work behaviour in situations.

Although the nature of the problem is determining the work environment of consultation, the aspects as highlighted, are valuable information with reference to a specific working environment which plays a role in the choice of the setting by the consultant and consultee.

4.1.2 Preparation by the Consultant and the Consuee

Preparation by both consultant and consuee is the start of the middle phase of the consultation process. Specific and relevant preparation for each consultation incident is very essential. Kadushin's (1977:129-142) and Brown's (1984:27-43) views on the components and nature of the preparation by the relevant parties will be discussed accordingly.

4.1.2.1 Preparation by the Consuee

The problem that will be addressed through consultation, must be identified in the supervisor's work load which is perceived as the responsibility of the profession represented by the consultant. Kadushin (1977:130) is of the opinion that, unless prospective consuees can clearly make such an identification, it is not likely that they will be able to use consultation appropriately. The consuee will for example not request for legal consultation if dealing with a medical problem, but rather consult with a medical consultant. Therefore consuees need to know enough about the kind of knowledge and skills that are likely to be possessed by the consultant with a given professional affiliation. If they know nothing about psychiatry, it is not likely that they can intelligently make use of what psychiatrists have to offer. The alternative according to Brown (1984:29) is to select those who are known as authorities on their subjects through writings, research, practices or past consultancies.

The identified problem must also be clearly defined so as to determine whether the consultant selected is the appropriate one. Thus the consuee must have sufficient knowledge of the problem. The selection of the consultant is made much easier and it prevents embarrassment and unproductivity when the problem is referred to the appropriate consultant. If the problem for example is primarily a legal one; it would be inappropriate to meet with a psychiatric consultant.

Additional preparation requires that consuees clarify for themselves the nature of their attitude and feeling towards consultation generally and towards consultants in particular. This will determine the focus and content of the consultation interaction. Consuees may have had previous contact on occasion with consultants which left them with residual positive or negative feelings which now intrude to shape initially the nature of their responses to these consultants. Consuees must be aware of this and must deal with it in good time.

If the consultant is a stranger the consultee may have feelings about the profession with which the consultant is affiliated. Sometimes the consultee may be prejudice toward an occupation, for example lawyers are "judgmental" and "authoritarian", and might also feel superior toward the consultant's profession. Kadushin (1977:131) is of the opinion that: "The images the consultee has in mind about the status relationship between the different professions act to contaminate the nature of the consultative interaction".

Another important component here is that consultees needs to be aware of their feelings about the age, and sexual differences between themselves and consultants. This introspection should relate to the honest evaluation of the consultee's readiness to self-exposure around the utilisation of consultation.

If the emotional preparation, as highlighted, has been dealt with, the consultation interaction will be more smoothly and goal-directed. Consultees thus need to clearly define the aspects with which they want help, the nature of their expectations and the specific ways in which they think consultants can be helpful.

Functional preparation is also essential and consultees must organise the material for presentation during consultation. This gives consultees the opportunity to organise their thinking on the problem and to focus on those areas where he especially wants discussion. Functional preparation, for example a written explanation of the problem, is seen by consultees as a time-consuming activity which is often resisted as consultation is for them a secondary activity. The consultee must thus plan meaningful and find time for consultation. In the Department of Social Services social work supervisors are extremely overloaded as they have to perform a dual function i.e. supervision to subordinates and line functions. Their planning for consultation should thus be very effective and meaningful.

4.1.2.2 Preparation by the Consultant

Consultant preparation parallels consultee preparation. The Consultants need to review and acquaint themselves with the general knowledge of the agency shared during the contract negotiation phase. Functional preparation is also done by the consultant, through selecting pertinent material, to take to the consultation session.

Emotional preparation by the consultant is also necessary. Although having feelings and attitudes about consultation generally, the consultant also has feelings about consultation with the kind of agency in particular and also the expectations from that particular agency. Consultants must also be aware of their prejudices, for example toward the profession of consultees. Thus consultants own hidden objectives can influence the consultation process and they must continuously be aware of it. Kadushin (1977:135) is of the opinion that: "Being aware of his hidden agenda may enable the consultant to prepare for her consultation somewhat differently".

In accordance with Brown's (1984:43) intention it is thus desirable that consultants do some "internal" preparatory work, by reflecting on their own feelings, attitudes, hopes, prejudices and hidden agendas, as the first session approaches. Another aspect which also needs to be considered as stated by Kadushin (1977:135) is the "constituency issue". This relates to whether consultants see themselves as primarily serving the interests and needs of the agency, the staff, the client group or the community which provides the funds for agency support. The consultant needs here to clarify the group to which priority will be given to. Furthermore the consultant must also practice an attitude of respect for the consultee's profession as well as for the consultee as a person. Together with this is an attitude of respect for the difference in role of the consultant and that of the consultee. Although they are equal as people but different in the expertise which they bring to the situation which engages their attention, the consultant being more expert than the consultee. Both consultee and consultant also need some commonality in points of view about the phenomena with which they are jointly concerned. Differences in view points can hinder the effective implementation for the consultation process if not identified beforehand.

In preparing for a consultation visit consideration needs to be given to determining who is the target group for the consultation. If consultants themselves are given the opportunity, those who bring greatest potential for impact on achieving the consultation objectives should be selected. If the immediate objective is client change, then the social workers who have direct access to the client are selected as the targets for consultation. If the objective is system change, then the target selected would be those directors who have greatest power in the system. Here according to Kadushin (1977:137) the consultant should be able to make a distinction between the "person initiating the request" and the "real consultee". This is the ideal but the reality is that the consultant often has to work with those who are available and prepared to be part of the consultation process.

Preparation for consultation may also involve informal procedures for getting acquainted with prospective consultees, for example going to lunch with consultee agency workers or attending some of the routinely scheduled meetings, etc. These activities reduce the social-emotional distance between consultants and consultees, make them more accessible and acceptable, and are part of the process of familiarisation. However these kinds of contacts raise the danger that the consultant may develop personal relationships with consultees or be co-opted by some particular consultee clique. In client-centered consultation the consultant may wish to consider meeting with or observing the client in preparation for consultation so as to establish the initial acquaintance and familiarisation.

Further consultants not only need to understand the culture of the consultee agency, but they need to prepare to accept and respect the priority given to the principal mission of that agency. The principal concern of social work is secondary and of interest to the consultee agency only and solely as it may contribute to the implementation of its own primary mission. Adapting Kadushin's (1977:138) comments: "The social work consultant is not being asked to help the consultee implement social work aims and objectives but rather to help the consultee use her own expert knowledge and skills more effectively in implementation of her own particular, unique, professional responsibilities".

While consultants should keep their options open and fluid, subject to reformulation in response to consultees' expressed needs, it would be wise to recognise their role beforehand as highlighted above and to reflect how they will put the consultation process into action. Awareness on the part of consultants with regard to where they stand initially on these issues will make the difference between desirable flexibility and undesirable confusion and ambiguity in the execution of the consultation process.

4.1.3 The working through of the problem during the middle phase

During this phase the focus is on the joint problem-solving by the consultant and consultee. Kadushin (1977:143-150; Lippitt & Lippitt 1977:134-135; Towle 1970:209-210) discuss the preliminary expositional phase as part of the working through of the problem during the middle phase.

4.1.3.1 The Preliminary Expository phase

The initial phase of interaction sets the stage for establishing the relationship and hence is of considerable importance. This period of interaction is primarily expository of nature and the responsibility for task performance rests primarily with the consultee at this point. Consultants are less active as their activities are primarily internal. By listening carefully, they draw inferences and develop diagnostic hypothesis in their attempt to get a clear, accurate picture of the problem.

During this phase the consultant attempts to help the consultee to define the problem in a manner which is congruent with the expertise of the consultant. This might be done either by reformulating the problem or by selective emphasis on some particular aspects of the problem so as to have congruency between the problem and that which the consultant can offer. Too great incongruence would suggest a referral to a more likely consultant. When consultees are unclear as to the nature of their problem the consultants may be more active. They attempt to demarcate and define the problem through asking questions, reflecting, clarifying, gently pointing to omissions, inconsistencies, and conflicts in the consultee's presentation and eliciting further details and information. Towle (1970:209) describe the processes whereby the consultant is involved during the consultation process, and the first of this, "... affirming what the consultee brings", fits in with the preliminary expository phase. Thus the consultant starts where the consultee is; bring certain aspects in context; reformulate other; acknowledge certain aspects; but "... helps the consultee attain and retain self-confidence".

Furthermore it appears that the formulation of the problem according to Kadushin (1977:145) may be complicated by the fact that the consultees often erroneously believe they know what the problem is. It is thus not surprising that where consultation fails, consultants often attribute to this to the fact that the consultee was not adequately prepared or that the purpose of the consultation was unclear. Consultation is not likely to be effective unless the consultant makes some effort to determine the expectations of the consultee. If it is unrealistic the consultant has the responsibility of helping to redefine the consultee's expectations.

Further it is important that the consultant determine what other solution has already been tried by the consultees. Thus through exploring with the consultee the previous efforts they have made to solve the problem display consultants respect for consultees and the readiness to credit them with what they know and can do (Kadushin

1977:147). During this period consultants also attempt to determine not only the nature of the problem with which consultees want help but also why they have such problems (Management Consultancy Guidelines 1982:159).

The consultation relationship should also be one of a co-operate relationship during this stage. The consultant needs the input from the consultee in order to understand the problem and the problem situation. The consultee needs the consultant to help in identifying and sorting alternatives and in problem solving. Apart from this, a feeling of trust and security in the relationship not only results from the nature of the interaction the consultant is able to establish, but it derives from confidence in the competence of the consultant. Confidence in the consultant also increases the adaptive rewards and strengthens the consultee's willingness to take risks because there is a likelihood of a problem-solving reward.

4.1.3.2 The Reactive phase

Kadushin (1977:150-156) and Towle (1970:209) describes a second process whereby consultants are frequently involved in: interpreting and clarifying what consultees present, bringing perspective to the problem and giving suggestions or recommendations. It is in this phase that consultants earn their title.

During this phase the task responsibilities rests primarily with the consultant. The consultee's ability to solve problems will determine to what extent the consultant will act directive or non-directive in this phase. Kadushin (1977:157) indicated that it is a versed combination of directive and non-directive approaches adapted in accordance with the needs of the consultee.

Although consultants are more active, consultees are also active in the sense that they respond to the alternatives, suggestions, advice and information being offered by the consultant. The consultees integrate what is being offered by consultants with the problems they experienced. During the consultation process the consultants perform various roles for example that of catalysts, facilitators, motivators and role models. Consultants also help consultees to think more systematically and objectively about the problems they face and provide new knowledge.

In addition to offering problem-solving help, consultants are also providing emotional support to consultees. Kadushin (1977:174) is of the opinion that consultation has a

cathartic component which is supportive of nature. Here consultants act as active, responsive, accepting listeners with whom consultees can discuss work-related problems. Thus support is very essential during this phase as it contributes to the development of the co-operate relationship between consultees and the consultants.

The instrumental aspects of consultation according to Kadushin (1977:152) are likewise similar to those employed by supervisors in other contexts which relates to the procedures and techniques employed in implementing the purpose and objectives of consultation. Consultants' skills in performing such functions is essentially similar to supervisors' skills in performing such functions interacting with social workers.

Effective consultation during the middle phase thus contain more than cognitive, didactic, descriptive suggestions or feasible suggestions offered to consultees by consultants. The actual work through of the problem is a joint process which focuses on problem-solving, extension of knowledge or the development of the consultees' skills to generalise their learning.

4.2 THE TERMINATION PHASE

Termination is also a very important phase in the consultation process as consultation progresses over a period of time and certain factors such as to sum up developments and worker growth, to confirm if expectations have been met, and to evaluate the consultation experience in its totality, both formally and informally, must be taken into consideration.

Participants move toward termination in accordance with the progress of the consultation process. The decision to terminate is according to Kadushin (1977:177) and Schein (1988:189) a joint responsibility from both parties. It is concerned with summing up, recapitulating, tying loose ends together and confirming that expectations have been met. Thus it looks back at what has transpired and looks ahead at the planning of the future, if follow-up consultation sessions is to be scheduled and the evaluation of the results of the consultation. Consultants have to be sensitive to the effects of their feedback and take responsibility for helping both on an individual and on an organisational level, with some of the consequences of the advice and suggestions they offer.

Another aspect that also needs to be addressed, is the value of consultation. Positive as well as the negative values must be highlighted as it contributes to a meaningful evaluation. The future role of the consultant also needs to be clarified as further needs for consultation might have been identified during the evaluation. While the autonomy of consultees is respected, it is desirable for consultants to indicate their continuing interest in the results of the consultation. This according to Kadushin (1977:178) is supportive to consultees who do not feel they are being abandoned. It is further expected that the consultation session will terminate with consultees having a positive feeling toward the idea of consultation and what it has to offer.

Another important aspect of termination is that it should provide for some procedure for feedback not only to and from consultees but also to agency or organisation administration. Administration should thus be involved in the consultation program beyond the decision to grant permission for consultation. Schein (1988: 185) is of the opinion that consultants should practice an open door policy to consultees or agencies from the point of view for further consultation if desired. Although evaluation forms continuously part of the consultation process, and in particular plays a role in termination, it will be discussed separately.

4.3 EVALUATION OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

In order to understand the consultation process the consultant has the responsibility of making some attempt at evaluation, to determine explicitly what went wrong, what went right, what was accomplished, and what failed of accomplishment (Kadushin 1977:10). Whilst one of the requirements for the growth and development of a profession is that its practices and activities are subjected to a strict research, evaluative studies about social work consultation is little and that which have been done were subjective, indefinite and lacking in specificity as identified by Kadushin (1977:191).

The influence and process of evaluation is not only an essential component of consultation, but also unavoidable. Thus it appears that evaluation should not only be limited to the termination phase of the consultation process. It is an integral part of the global process and commence already in the beginning phase of the process (Parsons & Meyers 1984:208).

According to Parsons and Meyers (1984:209) evaluation of consultation takes place in one of two forms, namely *formative evaluation* which is used to evaluate the decisions

made during the consultation as well as to determine whether the intervention strategy is successful or appropriate or if it needs to be adapted, and *summative evaluation* which determines the results of the consultation.

4.3.1 Formative evaluation

The purpose of formative evaluation is to collect information that expedite the decision making about the aforesaid steps and procedures in the consultation process. This enables consultants and consultees to identify their own assumptions and expectations about consultation and its prevention procedures, so as to determine the success of their own contributions and to find ways to improve their performance.

It is important to conduct this type of evaluation continually during the process of consultation. Although this is an informal evaluative procedure, it is also a systematic data-gathering process. Considering the time factor, an aid such as this which Parsons and Meyers (1984:210) propose, can be utilised with good results. Another aid that can also be utilised is the "Consultee Satisfaction Form" (Parsons and Meyers 1984:211-212). This questionnaire only serves as a guideline which can be adapted by consultants for example to add a section so as to determine whether further consultation about other problems is needed.

4.3.2 Summative evaluation

The purpose of this type of evaluation is to determine whether the goals and objectives of the consultation were attained. According to Parsons and Meyers (1984:213) this form of evaluation should answer the following questions:

- Were the objectives attained?
- Can goal attainment be attributed to the consultation and the resulting strategies?
- What factors contributed to goal attainment and what factors inhibited it?
- What is the value of this intervention in contrast to alternative interventions?

- What, if any, influence consultation had on other programmes or activities in the agency?

Despite the apparent benefits to be derived from evaluating the consultation process, Parsons and Meyers (1984:208) mention that most consultants still resist including evaluation in their consultation practices. This resistance may arise from the following reasons:

- (1) Critical evaluation of the consultation process often arouses concerns of judgement or evaluation of worth, as well as worries over how effective the consultation was conducted. In this context evaluation can be very unpleasant to some degree. The discomfort can be reduced if evaluation is geared toward the needs of both those performing consultation and those being served by it.
- (2) The view that the scientific function required for valid evaluation belongs to the writer and not the practitioner. Parsons and Meyers (1984:208) distinguish between these two processes: "The goal of research is to generate and confirm or disconfirm hypotheses about particular phenomena", while the main concern for the evaluation program "... is to gain insight into the workings of a consultation program and to determine the factors that seem to increase its positive impact".

A final step in evaluation is feedback (written and verbally) to all parties involved after the consultation process. Written feedback is an indication to the agency that the process of consultation has been concluded, but it can also be a stimulant to renew the contract and to engage in a new consultation contract. It is also very important that evaluation should occur during and after the consultation process so as to evaluate the results of the intervention strategies and to indicate to what extent goals were attained and shortcomings highlighted.

4.4 GENERAL PROBLEMS WITH CONSULTATION

Additional problems consultants may encounter are highlighted by Kadushin (1977:194-196); Lippitt and Lippitt (1977:139) and Steinberg (1989:105) in this discussion. Lippitt and Lippitt (1977:139) state further that a general problem internal consultants may encounter is to attain credibility as they are seen as part of the system and not the necessary acknowledgement receive for their expertise. External consultants encounter

similar problems particular in the entry phase. Steinberg (1989:105) discussed certain general problems with consultees and the important role of confidentiality and privacy as follows:

4.4.1 Problems with Consultees

Consultants have responsibilities to continue and to attempt through different ways and/or through alternative strategies to give an understanding to consultees to what extent their performances are hindered.

If the problem continues consultants must then consider to withdraw from the consultation. Such a situation can be very frustrating and unsatisfactory. Thorough evaluation is thus essential. Consultants must also discuss the considerations for consultation with consultees whereafter they can suggest other consultants.

4.4.2 Confidentiality and Privacy

The fact that agencies want to avoid exposure through presentations or publications as other institutions, personnel or professions may determine the agency in discussion if it is known on what expertise area consultation is conducted by the consultant, then a problem of confidentiality may arise. Steinberg (1989:106) is of the opinion that it does not necessarily have to be a problem as consultees and consultants frequently give each other the permission without problems to publicise articles about the consultation or to conduct a presentation collectively. It is the intention that parties must have mutual respect for each other.

Furthermore with consultation as a service, problems may be manifested on five different levels. The first level whereupon a problem derives from is the difficulty in formulating a clear-cut definition of consultation. Thus if there is a difficulty in clearly distinguishing consultation from other forms of indirect service, there is an even more difficult problem of definition in clearly differentiating social work consultation from the consultation efforts of other, related professionals. As a consequence, the consultation function has low visibility and is often neither consciously identified or analysed and, therefore, not clearly defined.

The value of social workers and the lack of proper recognition for the social work profession has already in 1909 by Cabot (1909:39) been discussed and ascribed to the

fact that he cannot recognise himself or tell you what the value of his profession is. Social workers are experts, but in what are they experts, what are their fields of knowledge or skills? The problem of defining the special expertise of social workers become acute in offering consultation service since consultants are identified by the nature of the expertise they seem to represent. Kadushin (1977:200) confirm this thought with his intention that the consultant's expertise tended to be idiosyncratic rather than representative and characteristic of expertise expected of most social workers.

Another problem faced by consultation as a service relates to the objectives of consultation i.e. should the emphasis of consultation be primarily preventive or should one accept the more modest, more limited remediation objectives of consultation? Should consultation be directed primarily toward systems change or should consultation be directed toward indirect service to particular clients in difficulty? Should the consultant be social change-oriented or clinically oriented? Thus it appears that the problem is sometimes expressed in terms of defining the nature of the problem.

A further problematic aspect relates to theory versus practice. The reality of status difference between participants in the consultation relationship is contradicted by the ideal which according to Kadushin (1977:204) is presented in the theory: "an equalitarian peer relationship". While both parties are equally competent in their own field of specialisation, each are deserving of respect for what they know and can do, for the purpose of the consultation they are clearly not equal. Kadushin (1977:204) is of the opinion that: "It is, in fact, the very inequality in their knowledge, skill and expertise that brings them together and provides the *raison d'être* for the encounter".

In general it is said that the actual behaviour of professionals doing consultation is not congruent with the theoretical principles of consultation as the consultant's traditional professional background determines the way in which the consultant conducts consultation. This may reflect the lack of specific training in consultation available to many consultants which is an additional problem.

The lack of specific training in consultation available to many consultants is an additional problem as indicated by Kadushin (1977:1-23). This shortcoming is reflected in the lack of special preparation for consultation with which most social worker consultants undertake this task. Research done by Kadushin and Buckman is applied by Kadushin (1977:206) to prove the situation that ± 35 percent of the respondents never had any formal training in consultation and the other ± 65 percent had been exposed to

such training over relative short periods. The problem of preparation is further compounded by the fact that, having accepted consultation responsibilities with little if any special training, most consultants are not provided with adequate supervision. Kadushin (1977:207).

Another aspect which is problematic is the funding support for consultation. The fact that consultation is not clearly defined attributes to a lack or no continued support for consultation programs. Apparently consultee agencies have not been sufficiently impressed with what such programs can offer to indicate a willingness to fund such programs. According to Kadushin (1977:208) another facet of this aspect is the fact that "... no third-party payments are available for reimbursement of consultation efforts". The value of consultation is not always realised and as funds are limited, budget allocation is only provided to vital services i.e. social security services as in the case of the Department of Social Services which is a high priority. Therefore if an agency wants to utilise consultation programs, this should not only be part of the agency's policy but also be part of its budget allocation so as to provide for financial support.

4.5 SUMMARY

The Chapter is concerned with the process of consultation following actual contact between consultant and consultee as discussed in the middle, and termination phase as well as evaluation. Some attention also being given to the specific problems encountered in each of these phases in the process.

The middle phase comprise of factors such as the setting/work environment wherein consultation takes place, preparation by both parties involved in consultation and then the actual working through of the problem. The working through of the problem in itself is divided in the preliminary expositional phase and the reactive phase. In the latter the responsibility is shifted from the consultee to the consultant.

The termination phase is subsequently also discussed in great detail as regards to how it also can be utilised successfully to sum up developments and worker growth, to confirm that expectations have been met, and to evaluate the consultation experience in its totality. Evaluation is another component which had been discussed. Although it appears that evaluation is usually linked to termination it should in fact be a continuous process in consultation whereby it already commences in the beginning phase. The

resistance toward and benefits of evaluation, and the types of evaluation that can be applied meaningfully during the consultation process have also been highlighted.

In general with consultation it appears that depending on the type of consultant, internal or external, certain problems differ to a certain extent. The effectivity of consultation is questioned, probably as consultation is not seen as a primary function, but as secondary to the execution of tasks in the work situation.

The lack of insight by the consultee sometimes causes frustration and may lead to the termination of the process. Confidentiality may be another problem, but it can be solved with the necessary permission of the consultant.

With consultation as a service, problems may be manifested on various levels such as a difficulty in defining consultation, unclear goals and objectives, theory versus practice, limited training in consultation and insufficient funds for the financing of consultants.

In view of the above-mentioned it is a fact that on the one hand a policy for consultation should stipulate the components of the process to be applied meaningful. On the other hand a policy for consultation should probably lessen the problems experienced with consultation.

CHAPTER 5

PERSPECTIVES FOR A POLICY ON CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK FOR APPLICATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Contributory factors to this study was the researcher's own awareness regarding shortcomings in the social work practice identified during his practical experience. Guidelines for the effective application of consultation, as well as a written policy relating to consultation in social work in the Department of Social Services for social work supervisors appeared to be of particular interest as this is evident in the obscurity that exist about how consultation is applied and utilised for supervisors within an organisation context.

This Chapter will thus look at certain perspectives which will serve as a guide for a policy on consultation in social work for application in the Department of Social Services. Furthermore the various elements relating to a policy in general and the role of the social work supervisor in policy formulation will be explained. Aspects with which a policy for consultation can be developed will be identified.

5.2 VIEWPOINTS FOR A POLICY ON CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK

Information relating to a policy for consultation in social work as such could not be found in the literature. The researcher thus used certain aspects relating to social work policy in general in an organisation as a point of departure which can serve as a guide for the formulation of a policy for consultation in social work in the Department of Social Services.

Tropman (1984:2) describe a policy as an idea which is embodied in a written document. This also needs to be ratified by the management of the organisation and as such be presented to serve as a guide for action. The motivation for the development of a policy is that it is specifically compiled as a guideline for decision making and actions concerning a specific matter like leave, supervision or consultation. Weinbach (1994:80) summarised a policy further as "a general statement or understanding which guide or channel thinking and action in decision making" which is embodied in a written

document, which is ratified by a legitimate authority, and is the result of the policy process.

A policy is thus perceived as an idea or a thought. It is a concept about the way things must take place or must be done or it can also be related ideas. Consequently it is of extreme interest that the right climate is established at an agency in order for employees to feel comfortable and susceptible to underwrite an idea or related ideas in a policy. Thus if consultation is the idea or thought of one or more employees, it can be developed to such an extent that a policy can originate from it.

Another aspect of a policy is the fact that a written policy is better than an understood policy for several reasons: It can be reviewed by all affected parties before it is put into place so that it meets their needs more adequately; a written policy can also be modified more efficiently than one that is merely understood and it does not necessarily mean that consultants will be hired and managed uniformly, but it does permit uniform retention and management standards (McGonagle, Jr. 1981:46). Further a written policy also refers to an open document which is available to exact inquiry and reflects whether the policy is executable and realistic or unreasonable, impracticable or unrealistic.

It is also necessary that a policy on staff development should be available at the organisation. The fact that workers educational needs are not reflected as objectives in the organisational structure and external evaluation standards, could be considered as one of the main reasons why organisations fail to satisfy their workers' educational needs. If an organisation's atmosphere is characterised by such contradictions, then it is detrimental to education and training. Therefore if consultation is applied and utilised as a separate component of staff development, it must be described as such in the organisation's policy for consultation.

A policy thus also emanates from a process and are not meant to give specific instructions as to what a worker should do or not do. It starts with an idea or thought about identified problems, shortcomings and needs. Afterwards it spreads to the investigation and the consideration of possible solutions. After thorough consideration the thoughts are then embodied in a written document, which is then ratified and implemented by the legitimate authority. During the implementation of a policy its effectiveness and feasibility are evaluated so as to identify possible problems and shortcomings which can then be addressed through amending or extending the policy after consideration.

In view of the above information it seems clear that organisations can only make mention of a policy if the elements highlighted are embodied therein. Welfare organisations thus cannot utilise or apply consultation before having a policy which includes the said elements. The elements which should be embodied in any organisation's policy for consultation in social work will be discussed shortly after the role of the social work supervisor in policy formulation is explained.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISOR IN POLICY FORMULATION

Policy formulation is often seen as the responsibility of administrative directors (legitimate authority, director, deputy/assistant director) in co-operation with middle management (supervisors) at an agency.

The motivation for the involvement of the supervisor is explained by Kadushin (1992: 21) and will be discussed shortly. The position of the supervisor in the hierarchy of the agency further helps to explain the supervisor's role in policy formulation. The supervisor is responsible for the performance of the direct-service workers and is accountable to administrative directors for the management and implementation of agency programs (as the supervisor controls the domain of management).

Policies for public social welfare agencies are often created by political bodies. The agencies are then answerable to these political entities for the correct interpretation and implementation of policy. This circumstance creates organisational pressure for some systems of accountability for workers' activity within the agency. This emphasises the importance for a supervisory apparatus.

The administrative directors depend on the supervisor to find out how agency policies are being implemented, successes and problems in implementation and workers' feelings about agency policies. This is the kind of information which only the direct-service worker possesses, and the kind of information the directors need to know if the agency is to be run successfully.

The supervisor also act as a guardian of the agency's belief system in situations where workers reject or are in non-compliance to significant aspects of agency policy which can be regarded as an act of hostility and a challenge to organisational authority. The supervisor thus functions as a buffer between the worker and agency in preserving organisational stability through communication of the policy and attempts to obtain compliance with it.

Although buffering on the one hand contributes to the preservation of the agency, rigidity and unresponsiveness to change on the other hand threaten the preservation of the agency. The supervisor in being an active participant in the formulation, or reformulation, of agency policy has the responsibility of using his/her knowledge (the deficiencies and shortcomings of agency policy when workers attempt to implement it) of the situation to formulate suggested changes in agency policy. The supervisor in a strategic position can act as an agency change agent. Standing between administration and the workers, he/she can actively influence administration to make changes and influence workers to accept them.

Another important aspect to consider with regards to the supervisor's role in policy formulation deals with the change in position and the responsibilities that go along with becoming a supervisor. This in and of itself forces a change in the worker's perception of agency policies. A change in perspective implies a further change in perception of the effects of agency policy. As a former worker, the supervisor measures the effects of agency policy on the client with whom he/she has had direct contact. As supervisor, he/she is in a better position to see the effects of agency policy in a wider perspective. A policy which may have impacted negatively on his/her own former clients may be seen as meeting more effectively the needs of a wider group of clients as a collectively.

Although the social work supervisor is involved with policy formulation in different ways and for various reasons, it is especially of interest with regards to consultation, to get his/her inputs about how service delivery to workers can be improved, as well as to identify the needs of consultants as a group and to bring this under the attention of the administrative directors or legitimate authority of the agency. The social work supervisor thus is, irrespective of the post and position he fills, responsible for the identification of needs according to which policy should be formulated, amended or extended.

5.4 ELEMENTS ON WHICH A POLICY FOR CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK CAN REST UPON

Pretorius (1991:43) stated that an organisation's policy for consultation arise from an existing policy on supervision. The basis for the formulation of guidelines in a policy on consultation is seen as the educational model, educational evaluation and educational program which forms part of the organisation's policy on supervision.

Supervision is aimed at enabling the social worker to function independently as quickly as possible. It means that a social worker can utilise other training methods, such as consultation, after graduating from supervision, for continued professional growth and development. Kadushin (1977:45) underwrites this concept in his opinion that consultation starts where supervision ends. Westheimer (1977:160) supports this viewpoint further by stating that a professional worker should have a lifelong learning process, but the purpose thereof should be determined and be in concurrence with the level of professionalism achieved by the worker.

Thus the assumption can be made that an organisation's policy for consultation in social work, should have criteria which will indicate when a worker is ready to graduate from supervision to consultation. The educational model of an organisation can serve as a basis for the requirements with which a social worker should comply with to function independent and to utilise consultation. The criteria currently applied in practice and as such be included as selection criteria in an organisation's policy for consultation, is described by Westheimer (1977:161-162) as such.

The social worker should dispose of profound knowledge and skills in order to manage most of the situations he/she is confronted with. Herewith goes competency in a broad spectrum of interview skills as well as the ability to evaluate his/her assistance as honest and realistic. The social worker must also have self knowledge and self insight in order to know what his/her abilities are and when it is necessary to request consultation. This also implies that the worker must be motivated to develop and build his/her own professional identity.

Furthermore it is expected from a worker to set own objectives and to search for independent ways for professional development. The social worker should also be responsible and involved in the organisation's business. Another prerequisite is an understanding of the aim and function of the organisation, his/her own role and tasks as well

as that of colleagues. It is also necessary to have thorough recent knowledge of internal resources, person power and material resources of the organisation. Thus the worker must have knowledge and skills to apply resources to the benefit of the client system inside and outside the community. The social worker should also be skilled to manage his/her total workload which requires that he/she should determine goals and set priorities. Otherwise he/she must be skilled in planning, organising and time management.

Pretorius (1991:47-48) also mentioned additional criteria such as profound knowledge of the client system, different helping aid models and approaches. As this study proposes guidelines for the application and utilisation of consultation for social work supervisors, guidelines for the graduation from supervision to consultation is thus not discussed in detail.

Furthermore the allocation and utilisation of internal consultants should also be included in a policy for consultation in social work. Such policy must contain specific guidelines so as to ensure that consultees know who the consultants are whom they can consult with. If the consultee has the right to only one consultant, and if he/she has a choice as well as the procedures adherent to it, then it must be stipulated in a policy for consultation so as to prevent disorder.

The term consultant is often used to describe an individual who performs mainly administrative and or supervisory functions as described by Shulman (1995:2374). Other times the concept is used to describe a person who fulfills the general role of a trainer. Sometimes a person's duty sheet includes administrative, supervisor, and training functions, as well as functions for consultation which make it a complex situation. The post level and requirements with which a consultant as expert should comply with, should be embodied in a policy for consultation.

The utilisation of external consultants and the procedures to be followed, especially when there are expenses attached, should also be contained in a policy. The elements that should be contained in a written policy relating to the use of external consultants, should deal with some of the requirements that: all consultants should agree to be bound by the organisation's policies; the consultant's final report to be sent to a particular individual in the agency; a system of approval and review on the performance of outside consultants be established; there be a disclosure of similar work done by other

consultants for the organisation; and that provision be made for budget control over projected use of consulting services in future (McGonagle, Jrs 1981:47).

5.5 SUMMARY

The preceding information highlighted general perspectives about a policy for consultation in social work. However it is of crucial importance that when a policy is formulated that the following elements should be covered i.e. an idea which is embodied in a written document to serve as a guide to action.

It is also clear that the social work supervisor has a vital responsibility in the formulation of policy. The supervisor is responsible for the identification of needs and shortcomings about policy formulation experienced by workers, which is brought under the attention of the directors. Thus the supervisor standing between top management and the workers can actively influence management to make changes and influence workers to accept them.

Although agencies differ from each other in the nature of the problem which is to receive attention, as well as the channels followed to make decisions, common points about what a policy for consultation in social work can be formulated on, have been indicated. The point of departure therefore is to assume that the agency does not have a policy relating to consultation at its disposal. Before a policy for consultation can be formulated, the elements as captured in Chapters 3 and 4 and highlighted again in this chapter should be taken into consideration.

Furthermore if these aspects are embodied in a written document and ratified then the policy for consultation can result from this. General aspects which should be incorporated in such a policy have been indicated and policy aspects which can contribute to a better understanding for social workers in their different roles as consultants and consultees, has been described.

The information as contained in this chapter points out the necessity thereof for an organisation to have a policy on consultation. Thus when all the elements of consultation are embodied in a written document and ratified, there is then justification for an agency to utilise consultation.

CHAPTER 6

THE APPLICATION AND UTILISATION OF CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES (PAWC)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

To render effective services, social work supervisors in the employment of the Department must possess adequate professional knowledge and skills. Personnel development is the primary management function which ensures that an agency's personnel keeps abreast of new trends and developments. One of the components of personnel development in social work, which contributes to effective service rendering as well as professional development, is consultation in social work. Thus the Department is also confronted with the demand of responsible and effective service delivery, just like any other social service rendering agency, which should be maintained and promoted through personnel development.

Social work services in the Department take place within the agency context as described in Chapter 2. Personnel development with consultation as component thereof is therefore on a similar basis applied and utilised in all the offices, which make this study with single adjustments applicable to all service offices. Thus it can be used as an aid in the utilisation and application of social work consultation as component of personnel development more effectively.

The results of the empirical study relating to the application and utilisation of consultation in the Department of Social Services is also reflected in this chapter. It will also describe a profile of the respondents in terms of their experience, professional training, occupational status and the utilisation of consultation. In addition to the descriptive profile of the respondents, the data collected about consultation and social work are analysed in terms of knowledge, skill, attitude and needs with regard to consultation in social work. Tables will be used to show relationships in terms of a standard unit of percentages - for example: $N = 8 = 100\%$, and the frequency distribution of a response will be shown in terms of quantity, that is, as numbers of observations. Such a descriptive analysis, and interpretation, will be used to ease the deduction of relevant conclusions.

6.2 PERSONAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Personal factors such as gender (sex), age, experience and qualifications have an important influence on the attitudes and skill of supervisors and directors. Such attitudes affect the quality as well as the manner in which consultation and personnel management generally is practised. For the purpose of this section, factors such as gender, age, experience, qualifications, and the nature and extent of supervisor's responsibilities per se will be discussed, as well as their relationship to one another and to the practice of consultation generally.

The nature and extent of the supervisor's responsibilities, that is, the number of supervisees as well as the nature of responsibilities other than supervision, are also identified and discussed as factors which influence the quality of the practice of consultation.

6.2.1 Gender distribution

Table 6.1 Gender distribution of respondents

GENDER	N	%
Male	3	37,5
Female	5	62,5
TOTAL	8	100

In view of table 6.1 it appears that the biggest percentage (62,5 % [5]) of the respondents were females. Probably this is based on the reality that social work as a profession is mainly practised by women and that female social workers generally outnumber their male colleagues. In accordance with information gathered from the South African Council for Social Work it appears that 8 695 female and 1 004 male have been registered as social workers on 31 March 1997. This information confirms that social work as a profession is predominantly practised by women.

6.2.2 Age distribution

Age did not play a role in the selection of respondents. However the following picture emerged concerning the population.

Table 6.2 *Age distribution of respondents*

AGE GROUP	N	%
25 - 29		
30 - 34	1	12,5
35 - 39	2	25,0
40 - 44	3	37,5
45 - 49	1	12,5
> 50	1	12,5
TOTAL	8	100

The following is reflected from table 6.2:

The age of the respondents varied from 30 years and older to 50 years. The biggest concentration (37,5 % [3]) respondents appeared to be in the age group between 40 - 44 years. This is an indication of the fact that years of service is the criteria for promotion rather than career ability. This also implies that the emphasis on the criteria for promotion has as yet not been shifted from the years of service to career ability.

In addition from the investigation it appears that although heads of agencies, considered criteria to a certain extent at the appointment of supervisors, the tendency was that supervisors were appointed because of their seniority and their years of experience. Hopefully agencies currently do have more specific criteria for the appointment/promotion of senior personnel, because Weekes (1988:28-30) confirms the opinion that all social workers with many years of experience do not necessarily become successful supervisors.

6.2.3 Professional qualifications

Professional qualifications were not considered when selecting respondents. Findings are, therefore, outlined in tables 6.3 and 6.4.

(a) Distribution of initial training in social work

The distribution of the initial training in social work for the respondents is reflected in table 6.3.

Table 6.3 *Distribution of initial training in social work*

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS	N	%
BA (SW) Degree 3 yr	2	25,0
Hons. in S.W.	3	37,5
M.A. in S.W.	3	37,5
TOTAL	8	100

From table 6.3 it appears that the majority of the respondents (6), initially had extended training of more than three years in social work, where 2 (25,0 %) of the respondents initially had three years of training. In this regard it appears that the majority of social workers have undergone extended training beyond the expected training. This is also a requirement in terms of the Social Work Act, No. 110 of 1978. Thus it appears that agencies do provide social workers with the opportunity to upgrade their professional education. This opinion is further supported by Karlushin (1992:11) that agencies do retain some primary responsibility for professional education.

(b) *Supplementary qualifications of the respondents*

From the data collected it also appears that from the eight respondents' investigation only 2 (25,0 %) respondents possess other qualifications besides their social work qualifications. The nature of the supplementary qualifications is captured in table 6.4.

Table 6.4 *Other qualifications of the respondents*

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS	N	%
B.A. (Hons.) Psychology	1	12,5
Diploma Personnel Management	1	12,5
None	6	75,0
TOTAL	8	100

From table 6.4 it also appears that the two respondents with other qualifications, can apply this knowledge as supplementary to social work. These responses also indicate that the majority of respondents (6 respondents = 75 %) have no need for supplementary qualifications. Thus only qualifications relating to social work seem to be the ultimate for career advancement for the majority of respondents.

6.2.4 Field of specialisation

Table 6.5 indicates the field of specialisation of the respondents.

Table 6.5 *Field of specialisation of respondents*

NATURE OF FIELD SPECIALISATION	N	%
Child care	1	12,5
Probation services	4	50,0
Generalist	2	25,0
Intake services	1	12,5
TOTAL	8	100

Above responses indicate that the respondents have a specialisation of function and task. Kadushin (1992:45) claims that this is characteristic of a bureaucratic organisational structure of which the respondents forms part of which is, "... an effective organisational format for co-ordinating the co-operative efforts of a sizeable group of people, each of whom is engaged in a different task necessary for the achievement of common organisational objectives". This also seems to indicate that the respondents do have other responsibilities besides the supervision of supervisees which likely will have an adverse effect on the quality of supervision and or consultation being practised.

6.2.5 Training received for role as supervisor

The type of training which the respondents received for the role of supervisor is reflected as follows, in table 6.6.

Table 6.6 *Training received by respondents*

TYPE OF TRAINING	N	%
In-service	3	37,5
University training	3	37,5
None	2	25,0
TOTAL	8	100

The responses are significant in as far as a majority of 75 % of respondents (6) received some form of training as supervisor at some stage in their management career.

However, 25 % of respondents (2) never received any formal in-service training for their position of middle-manager/social work supervisor. Therefore, whilst this seems to indicate that there is a realisation by welfare agencies of the need for in-service training for social work supervisors, there remains the 25 % who did not have such benefits. This seems to indicate a need to counteract the lack of professional supervisory training.

Subsequently, the practice of supervision in social work and the roles of the supervisor will be considered in terms of the responses received during interviews with the respondents.

6.2.6 Practice experience of social work supervisors

All 8 respondents (100 %) qualifying to answer this question currently are in some form of management, and thus supervisory position. This is confirmed by Table 6.7 below.

Table 6.7 Practice experience of the respondents in social work supervision

PRACTICE EXPERIENCE IN SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISION	N	%
1 - 3 years	0	0
4 - 7 years	3	37,5
7 - 10 years	3	37,5
> 10 years	2	25,0
TOTAL	8	100

It appears to be significant that all 8 (100 %) respondents have more than four years of practice experience of supervision. This fact can be taken to validate the respondents' opinions on supervisory practice based on their own practical experience derived from case management and the expertise acquired from collaboration with staff inside and outside the organisation. This also emphasises supervisors' consulting role in helping workers manage cases and help colleagues plan programs or solve staff problems (Austin 1981:113).

6.2.7 The number of direct-service workers for whom respondents are accountable

The number of direct-service workers for whom the respondents are accountable was tested with this question. The results are shown subsequently in Table 6.8.

Table 6.8 *Total number of workers for whom respondents are accountable*

	NO. OF SUPERVISORS	NUMBER OF WORKERS
	1	7
	2	5
	3	0
	4	3
	5	6
	6	6
	7	7
	8	11
TOTAL	N = 8 = 100 %	45
AVERAGE		5,6

The responses given are significant in as far as a majority of 87,5 % of respondents (7) are responsible for direct-service workers. In this regard it can be seen that the number of supervisees for whom the respondents are accountable total 45 persons. The number per supervisor ranges from between 3 and 11: the average number being 5,6 supervisees per supervisor. This information was considered important by the researcher as to determine the number of supervisees for whom supervisors were accountable. Such information is useful in that it enables the researcher to evaluate, more meaningfully, the appropriateness of the nature and extent of the practice of consultation for supervisors. This information also implies that supervisors in implementing their supervisory responsibilities and functions, organise the work place and human resources to achieve organisational objectives (Kadushin 1992:77).

6.2.8 Additional responsibilities

The additional responsibilities the respondents have in the position of supervisor was tested with this question. The results are shown subsequently in Figure 2.

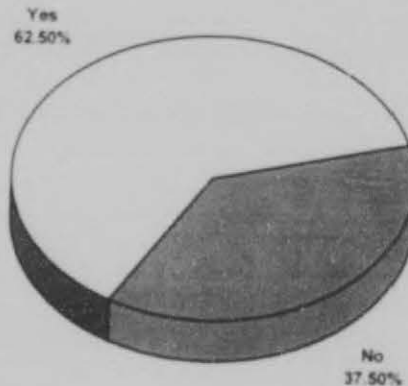


Figure 2 *Additional responsibilities of the respondents*

In view of the above responses given a majority of 62,5 % of respondents (5) have additional responsibilities. These responsibilities include: canalisation of cases; office management; after hours assessments/intakes; meeting attendance, and recruitment of staff. Although having additional responsibilities they are also accountable for an above-average number of supervisees (see table 6.8), which is in accordance with organisational policies and procedures where the average is about 4 supervisees per supervisor. Thus it appears that only three (37,5 %) out of eight supervisors are able to devote all their time to supervision and or consultation. This seems to indicate a need to counteract the lack of supervision and or consultation. Therefore it is important to distinguish between those additional responsibilities which are of a regular and an ongoing nature and those occasional responsibilities which impinge upon one's usual responsibilities, as it is vital that the workers for whom supervisors are held accountable do not feel neglected as a result.

6.3 **SOCIAL WORK AND CONSULTATION**

This section of the questionnaire schedule encourages respondents to look at their personal experience of the practice of consultation in social work based on their own understanding and utilisation.

6.3.1 Existing understanding of consultation in social work

In view of the analysis from the data of the respondents, it appears that their understanding of consultation can be categorised in four descriptions. The descriptions are highlighted hereunder whereby the data will be reflected comparatively in Table 6.9.

Descriptions of consultation in social work

- 01: Consultation is a two way process of professional guidance in order to arrive at the best conclusions relating to aspects of policy development and implementation.
- 02: Consultation is different from supervision - an interactional process between a supervisor and a senior social worker on a more advanced level.
- 03: The social worker progress to a level where supervision is not needed anymore and is then transferred to the level of consultation. Professional assistance is then provided on request.
- 04: Consultation is about talking to an expert about a work related topic or process during which the process itself leads to results. It is not compulsory for the consultee to submit to the consultant's advice.

Table 6.9 *Distribution of respondents' understanding of consultation in social work*

DESCRIPTIONS OF CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK	N	%
01	4	50,0
02	1	12,5
03	2	25,0
04	1	12,5
TOTAL	8	100

From the above responses it appears that respectively the biggest concentration is found with description 01 (50 % [4]) respondents, and description 03 (25 % [2]) respondents, while description 02 and 04 has one (12,5 % respectively) respondent each. This seems to indicate that there are significant differences between the respondents understanding of consultation in social work.

Comparing these descriptions with the descriptions of consultation in social work as described by writers (Barker 1995:77; Kadushin 1977:25; Schulman 1995:2377; Westheimer 1977:157) as a two way process between two persons, namely a consultant - i. person who possesses special expertise in a particular area - and a consultee who needs that expertise to solve a specific problem, the information in Table 6.9 could also be meaningful with regards to agencies' understanding of the meaning of consultation in social work. Kadushin (1977:37-48) and Westheimer (1977:158-159) distinguish, as indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, consultation clearly from related processes in social work.

From this information it also seems that confusion and uncertainty is to a great extent present amongst respondents about the notion of consultation in social work and related processes in social work. This is probably linked to the limited knowledge about consultation in social work possessed by the respondents as such.

6.3.2 Other explanations of consultation

The results of the respondents awareness of other explanations of the different meanings connected to the concept of consultation are shown subsequently in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10 Awareness of other explanations of consultation

OTHER EXPLANATIONS	N	%
Yes	4	50,0
No	4	50,0
TOTAL	8	100

According to Table 6.10 four (50 %) of the respondents are well aware of other explanations of consultation, in other words that this process does not appear exclusively in the social work profession. The same percentage (50 % [4]) respondents of the group investigated is also unaware of other explanations. This information is indicative of the uncertainty and limited knowledge concerning the concept of consultation by the respondents of the study group.

The other explanations identified from the data collected are described subsequently.

Descriptions of other explanations of consultation

- 01: Consultation is linked to amalgamation and transformation
- 02: Supervisors have to work through all supervisees' work and guide them and identify their development needs.
- 03: Consultation with other professions i.e. Psychology, etc.
- 04: Consultation as the graduation of the supervisee from supervision to consultation and from the supervisor higher up, consultation is a formality.

In view of the above information the respondents' understanding of other meanings of consultation indicate significant differences. This probably is related to the fact that the supervisor in the execution of some tasks, like welfare planning, case loads and supervision of supervisees, often have to consult with other professionals.

This information is also meaningful with regards to the respondents' real awareness of other explanations of consultation. Kadushin (1977:49) and Schulman (1995:2377) confirm that consultation is often confused with other related professions. Thus an obscurity with and uncertainty about the concept of consultation as such, is further reflected.

6.3.3 Utilisation of consultation by the respondents

The responses of the extent to which respondents utilised internal- as well as external consultation during their working experience is outlined below.

(a) Utilisation of internal consultation by respondents

The extent to which the respondents utilised internal consultation during their work experience is reflected in Figure 3.

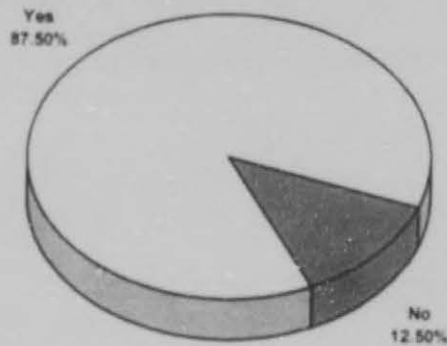


Figure 3 *Utilisation of internal consultation by the respondents*

The responses given are significant in as far as a majority of 87,5 % of respondents (7) utilised internal consultation. Only a small percentage (12,5 % [1]) never used the process of internal consultation. The respondents who utilised the process, do so in accordance with their own definition and understanding of consultation. The ones who do not use it are possibly not so clear and familiar with the concept and correct processes, as described by Kadushin (1977:101-102) and Lippitt and Lippitt (1977:139-140).

This information also correlates with the information reflected in Table 6.9 and Table 6.10, as it confirms the uncertainty and confusion which exists amongst the respondents about consultation in social work.

(b) Utilisation of external consultation by respondents

The extent to which the respondents utilised external consultation is explained in figure 4.

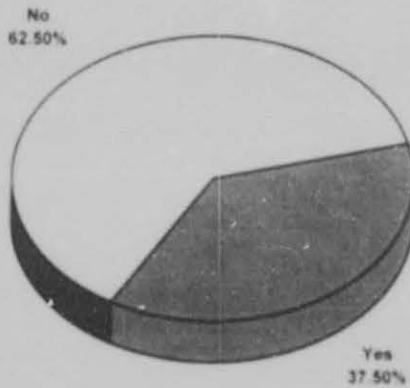


Figure 4 *Utilisation of external consultation by respondents*

Figure 4 reflects that the majority of the respondents 62,5 % (5) did not make use of external consultation during their work experience. This is evident according to the interpretations of the respondents results that the agency's policy does not make provision therefore. Thus no written document exists which according to Weinbach (1994:80) is ratified by the head of the policy- and planning section of the agency, which also stipulates guidelines about the application and utilisation of consultation.

The fact that only 37,5 % (3) of respondents, utilised external consultation, seems to indicate a big possibility that it is not used effectively, especially when comparing the information of Table 6.9 with the information of Table 6.10. This reflects a confusion and uncertainty that exists about the description of consultation in social work, as well as about the other meanings of consultation. The respondents are probably also uncertain about the process and meaning of external consultation as discussed by Kadushin (1977:101-102) and McGonagle, Jr. (1981:46-47).

6.3.4 Respondents acted as consultants prior to their present position

The extent to which the respondents acted as a consultant in social work before their present position was tested with this question. The results are shown subsequently in Figure 5.

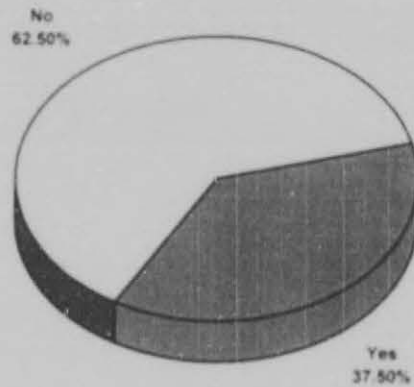


Figure 5 Respondents acted as consultants prior to present position

From Figure 5 it appears that in as far as a minority of 37,5 % respondents (3) already acted as consultants before their present position as middle management. However, 62,5 % of respondents (5) never acted as consultants prior to their position as middle manager. This information confirms the obscurity that exist amongst the respondents especially in the light of the uncertainty and confusion about the concept consultation in social work as is reflected in table 6.9.

6.4 POLICY AND CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK

From the data collected the following detail, concerning an established, written policy, which is contained either in a manual and/or procedure guideline of the agency concerned, will be interpreted.

6.4.1 The existence of a policy for consultation in social work

From the data collected the following detail regarding an established, written policy will be interpreted. The presence of a written policy about consultation is reflected in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11 *Existence of an established, written policy for consultation*

ESTABLISHED, WRITTEN POLICY FOR CONSULTATION	N	%
Yes	0	0
No	5	62,5
Uncertain	3	37,5
TOTAL	8	100

From Table 6.11 the responses given are significant in as far as a majority of 62,5 % of respondents (5) are unaware of a policy for consultation in their organisation, and 3 (37,5 %) respondents are uncertain whether such a policy does at all exist.

Thus in view of the above information it appears that the respondents have no knowledge about the organisation's policy and procedures or according to Tropman (1984:2-5) no written document exists which is ratified and can serve as a guideline for consultation in social work. It is probably because of this reason that there exists such uncertainty and confusion relating to consultation. This fact yet confirms the need for this particular study.

When requested to motivate their response, 6 respondents (75 %) did so. The respondents reasons for the absence of a policy regarding consultation are grouped together as follows:

- Transformation phase has not as yet been finalised.
- Policy has not as yet been established/embarked upon.
- Lack of human-resource infrastructure.
- The organisation never understood the definition or need for a policy as its focus has always been on production only/service to clients. Thus this area is severely neglected.
- No needs assessments (Supervisors are knowledgeable and can cope on their own; emphasis was placed more on supervision (12 months) for new appointees).

These motivations seem to indicate a need for an established, written policy for consultation in social work as acknowledged by the respondents in order to apply and utilise the practice of consultation as effectively as possible. This is also evident in the awareness level which exists in the agency which is especially significant as the agency in this instance is a government institution, which is supposed to put guidelines in place for private welfare organisations.

6.4.2 Need for a policy regarding consultation

In view of the question of whether the agency should have a policy regarding consultation all 8 respondents (100 %) responded positively with motivations. The motivations given, often involved more than one reason, could be group as follows:

- To continuously stimulate professional growth and productivity as well as the image of the agency as a whole.
- To define parameters and specify guidelines on what tasks/processes to focus on in a consultation session.
- Consultation policy guarantees ongoing training.
- To promote a uniformed understanding of consultation.
- To address existing needs regarding consultation.

These motivations can be summarised as such, namely, that existing agency policy should be amended or extended in order to address the above needs regarding consultation in social work. This is confirmed by Kadushin (1992:21-24) that the social work supervisor is also responsible for the identification of needs concerning such a policy as the supervisor is in a better position to see the effects of agency policy in a wider perspective.

6.5 UTILISATION OF CONSULTATION AND CONSULTANTS

In view of the information in point 6.4.2 the need for consultation for supervisors was expressed by all the respondents. This fact should encourage managements to take a

closer look at the philosophy of consultation in social work, its context and its content; and a look at the roles of consultants and consultees.

Furthermore, except for the specific content of consultation in social work, practice in consultation is based upon agency policies and procedures, irrespective of the social work method utilised by the supervisor. However, it has also been noticed that all supervisors either lacked the necessary knowledge and insight into the need for consultation in social work, or the practical experience needed to provide meaningful practice guidance. This realisation contributed towards this research into the opinions, attitudes, and the knowledge needed by the effective and efficient social work supervisor.

In this section the interview schedule was used, to assess the respondents attitudes and opinions on the basis of their personal practice experience of consultation in social work, whether as consultant or consultee. Against this background the responses to this section of the interview schedule can be interpreted as follows.

6.5.1 Engaging the services of a consultant

In this part of the schedule respondents were requested to indicate whether they are currently engaging the services of a consultant. The responses received are outlined in Table 6.12 below.

Table 6.12 *Respondents currently engaging services of a consultant*

CURRENTLY ENGAGING A CONSULTANT	N	%
Yes	1	12,5
No	7	87,5
TOTAL	8	100

From the above responses it appears to be evident that the majority of respondents (7 respondents = 87,5 %) seemed to see little need for engaging the services of a consultant. This is probably related to the fact that consultation is still a relatively new concept for the majority of respondents. The information in Table 6.9, which reflects the respondents' understanding of consultation in social work and a lack in policy for consultation, further confirms the need for adequate practice in consultation in social work.

6.5.2 Development opportunities in consultation

Adequate practice in consultation was found to be a need by respondents. Table 6.13 indicates whether the agency provides respondents with the opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge and qualities in consultation in social work.

Table 6.13 *The existence of development opportunities in consultation*

THE EXISTENCE OF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES	N	%
Yes	2	25,0
No	5	62,5
Uncertain	1	12,5
TOTAL	8	100

From the above responses it appears to be evident that the majority of respondents (62,5 % = 5) are unaware or uncertain of development opportunities regarding their skills and qualities in consultation in social work at their agency. It is also informative that in-service training of staff development is not necessarily identified by the respondents as opportunities for the development of consultation as a process in social work. This may be a result of the fact that consultation is still a relatively new concept at the majority of welfare agencies.

The other 25 % (2) of the respondents indicated that the nature of the development opportunities which are available are through the informal studying of literature; formal lectures and the attending of workshops, symposia and conferences. This tendency can be related to the fact that self study is one of the more practicable ways whereupon the professional person can develop and grow. This also confirms the motivation for this study i.e. that little adequate training in consultation in South Africa exists. This view is supported in research done by Kadushin and Buckman where it appears to Kadushin (1977:206) that the lack of training in consultation in social work as such, can also be viewed as a serious problem area.

6.5.3 The agency's planning for development opportunities in consultation

The presence and planning for development opportunities at the agency where the respondents are stationed is indicated in Table 6.14 below.

Table 6.14 *Planning for training in consultation*

PLANNING FOR TRAINING	N	%
Yes	3	37,5
No	3	37,5
Uncertain	2	25,0
TOTAL	8	100

From the above responses it appears that the existence of any planning for training in consultation at the agency is not worth mentioning, but it is also significant that 3 (37,5 %) respondents are unaware of future planning about development opportunities in consultation at their agency, while 2 (25 %) of respondents are uncertain whether such planning exists.

This uncertainty about the awareness of opportunities for development in consultation exists amongst middle-managers who are involved with planning and policy formulation. In fact the problem is around both a clear definition of consultation and an uncertainty relating to the goals and objectives of consultation. This is highlighted by Kadushin (1977:197-202), factors which contribute to influence this uncertainty amongst such a large percentage (62,5 % [5]) of respondents. These findings yet again confirm the need and motivation for this study.

6.5.4 Type of consultants respondents would consult

The type of consultants given by the respondents are described and outlined in Table 6.15.

Descriptions of the types of consultants

- 01: Internal consultants in social work
- 02: Social work consultants from other agencies
- 03: Internal consultants from another profession
- 04: External consultants from another profession

Table 6.15 *Distribution of the types of consultants that would be consulted*

TYPES OF CONSULTANTS	N	%
01	4	50,0
02	1	12,5
03	0	0
04	3	37,5
TOTAL	8	100

From the responses given there appears to be a fair degree of unanimity among respondents as to the use of internal and external consultants. While 4 respondents (50 %) consider the need for using internal consultants in social work (01), three respondents (37,5 %) saw external consultants from another profession as their need. In this regard the need for consultants whether it is internal or external seems to be a priority amongst the majority of respondents.

The responder's own description and understanding, and their knowledge about consultation in social work, also has an influence on the presence of the types of consultants that would be consulted, particularly if consultation is not necessarily seen by them as a process with phases, and the factors of the choice of a consultant, as explained in the literature (Kadushin 1977:91-152; Parsons and Meyers 1984:99-121; Steinberg 1989:43-58).

Further, the motivations given to support the desirability to consult both internal and external consultants could be grouped together in the following categories:

- External consultants bring another dimension to own work experience and needs.
- Internal consultation gives direction to agency policies, etc.
- External consultation provides broader insight than the normal acts and or policies
- Internal consultation is mostly conducted internally by fellow social workers usually of a higher rank.

Once the opinions of respondents concerning the use of consultants was clarified, an attempt was made to tap the opinions and attitudes of respondents with regard to the provision of consultation services by the agency.

6.5.5 Consultation services available when needed

Respondents were encouraged with this question to point out whether their agency provides them with the necessary consultation services. Alternatively they could state whether they received no services for whatever reason. The following responses received are captured in Figure 6.

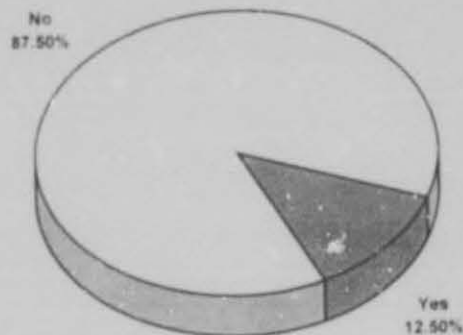


Figure 6 *The provision of consultation services when needed by the agency*

Seven respondents (87.5 %) indicated that their agency failed to provide the necessary consultation services when needed, while one respondent (12.5 %) indicate that such services are mostly conducted in the form of development training. This information is probably related to the fact that the concept of consultation in social work is still perceived by the majority of welfare agencies as a relatively unknown concept.

The respondents were also tested with the question concerned in order to indicate whether the agency should provide the necessary consultation. All 8 respondents (100 %) felt that the agency should provide the necessary consultation services when needed and the nature of such consultation should be as follows:

- Support structures, training opportunities and rewards. Discussion forum, human resources unit with focus on career pathing and capacity building.
- Guidance when requested, provision of information and or knowledge when needed, to serve as a "sounding board". Insight giving.
- Free access i.e. need and situation will determine nature.
- Open door policy with some meaningful structure built in. It should always have empowerment as goal and motivation for further development and training.
- More needs orientated on professionally specific training i.e. work related.
- Consultation should not be based only on theoretical perspectives but also on perspectives based on other professions with the emphasis placed on the aspects of dealing with change in a dynamic society.
- Consultation should always be available in order to deal with day to day problems encountered with supervisees. Consultants from other professions will also be very useful.

From the above information it is clear that although significant differences exist amongst the respondents about their understanding of the nature of consultation in social work, the agency is still considered as the primary source for the provision of professional education i.e. consultation.

6.6 THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

Consultation in social work according to Kadushin (1977:91-182) and Steinberg (1989:17-57) is a process which involves a series of sequential steps designed to achieve the objective of the contact and, it has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Each phase of the process has some distinctive characteristics and each phase requires the performance of certain clearly defined tasks by either the consultant or the consultee and in some instances, both. The effectiveness of consultation is *inter alia* dependent on the extent to which the consultant is able to run the process according to the above-

mentioned phases. The interpretations of the respondents' responses about this aspect will be discussed in this section.

6.6.1 Utilisation of consultation as a process

Table 6.16 indicates whether the respondents follow a process when conducting consultation.

Table 6.16 *Utilisation of consultation as a process by the respondents*

DO YOU USE A PROCESS IN CONSULTATION?	N	%
Yes	6	75,0
No	2	25,0
Uncertain	0	0
TOTAL	8	100

From table 6.16 it appears that 6 (75 %) respondents utilised consultation as a process, while 2 (25 %) respondents are uncertain if it is a process. This information appears to support the hypothetical view that the unfamiliarity with the concept of consultation in welfare agencies leads to uncertainty about the utilisation and execution of the process amongst social work supervisors.

6.6.2 Phases of the consultation process

The 6 respondents (75 %) who, according to table 6.16, indicated that consultation is a process, divided the process in phases which can be described as follows.

Description of phases

01: Preparation

02: Contracting

03: Consultation interview(s)

04: Termination

- 05: Evaluation
- 06: Mutual feedback
- 07: Determination of learning needs

The other 2 (25 %) respondents who are uncertain about the process of consultation proposed the following descriptions as possible phases in the process of consultation.

Description of proposed phases in the consultation process

- 01: Preparation
- 02: Contracting
- 03: Consultation interview(s)
- 04: Termination
- 05: Evaluation

In view of the above information it is clear that the majority of respondents do perceive the above-mentioned steps as an integral part of the consultation process, which indicates profound knowledge of the process in consultation. This knowledge should enable the respondents to evaluate the extent wherein consultation progresses as a process, in order to determine its effectiveness as an effective management tool for professional and agency development.

6.7 FREQUENCY OF CONSULTATION

The need or problem of the consultant determines the frequency with which consultation is offered. The frequency with which internal and external consultation is given is subsequently considered in terms of the responses received during interviews with the respondents.

6.7.1 The distribution of the frequency of the utilisation of internal consultation

Table 6.17 reflects the distribution of the frequency with which internal consultation is offered in the Department.

Table 6.17 *Frequency with which internal consultation is offered*

FREQUENCY	N	%
Weekly	1	12,5
Monthly	2	25,0
On request of the social worker	5	62,5
TOTAL	8	100

From the above analysis the responses given are significant in as far as a majority of 62,5 % of respondents (5) indicated that they utilised consultation on request. The second highest concentration, 2 (25 %) respondents, indicated that consultation is offered on a monthly basis. A characteristic of consultation is the fact that it is given in response to a request and that it is voluntary (Kadushin 1977:26; Collins 1977:4). Thus this information again reflects the profound knowledge of the respondents of the process of consultation in social work.

6.7.2 Frequency with which external consultation is offered

The results obtained of the frequency with which external consultation is offered in the agency are indicated in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18 *Frequency with which external consultation is offered*

FREQUENCY	N	%
Fortnightly	1	12,5
On request of the supervisor/worker	1	12,5
Uncertain	1	12,5
Own responsibility	1	12,5
Seldom	1	12,5
Never	3	37,5
TOTAL	8	100

From table 6.18 the responses in this case appear to be rather disturbing in that the majority of respondents (3 respondents = 37,5 %) experienced a lack of external consultation in the agency i.e. it never takes place. The above results also indicate that the frequency of external consultation takes place on different levels, respectively, in accordance with the respondents own understanding. This information confirms the fact that the process of consultation in social work is still a relative unfamiliar concept to the agency or that respondents are uncertain or unaware of the process in consultation. This information is further supported by Kadushin's findings that social work literature and current practices fails to reflect an interest in social work consultation (Kadushin 1992:19).

6.8 PROBLEMS WITH CONSULTATION

It was of importance in this research to assess to what extent respondents experienced problems in the practice of consultation, in order to draw attention to these problems and to find alternative solutions to them.

6.8.1 Type of problems encountered with consultation

The problems experience by the respondents with consultation are outlined in table 6.19.

Table 6.19 Problems encountered with consultation

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED	N	%
Yes	7	87,5
No	1	12,5
TOTAL	8	100

Responses given by the respondents, based on practical experience, seem to indicate that there is a need to look at an agency's practice of consultation, since only one respondent (12,5 %) expressed that there were no problems at all relating to the practice of consultation in social work, while 7 respondents (87,5 %) felt that there were very real problems surrounding the practice of consultation in social work.

Seven respondents (87,5 %) were prepared to motivate their responses, with only one respondent (12,5 %) being unwilling to do so.

Motivations given, often involving more than one reason, and could be categorised as follows:

- Supervisors are overloaded.
- Lack of constant monitor, evaluation and feedback process to enhance performance.
- Lack of person power, resulting in dual function (supervision and line functions).
- Lack of policy, place and a proper structure.
- No provision for funding exists
- Consultant is inaccessible and unavailable and has no idea of the practical situation
- Consultant lacks consultative experience

These motivations can be summarised as follows, namely, that the selection and training of supervisors is often inadequate, resulting in a lack of understanding and a commitment to the practice of consultation, and undue demands made on supervisors, overloading them, which can result in problems being experienced by both social worker and supervisor.

6.9 NEEDS REGARDING CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK

The practice of consultation in social work is at times questioned by social work supervisors and non-social work supervisors alike, considering that the training of social work supervisors should equip them to function independently as professionals, right from the start of their employment by a given agency. The experience of the respondents is outlined below.

6.9.1 Identified needs regarding consultation in social work

The identified needs for consultation are reflected in figure 7.

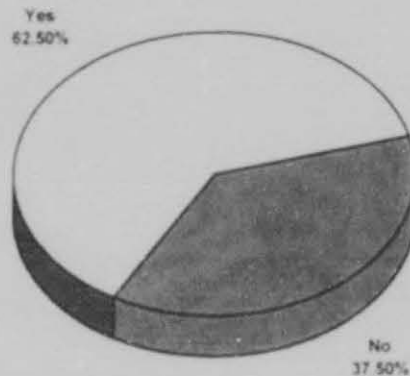


Figure 7 *The need for the practice of consultation in social work*

From the above responses it appears to be evident that the majority of respondents (5 respondents = 62,5 %) consider the need for the practice of consultation in social work to be very great, while only 3 respondents (37,5 %) appeared to question such a need. This suggests that if there is a need for adequate practice in consultation, supervisors must be trained accordingly. This also indicates that a need for knowledge about and skills in consultation in social work exists amongst the respondents. Thus this data serves to confirm the motivation of this study and also highlights the problem of no or limited training in consultation (Kadushin 1977:206).

When requested to indicate their needs regarding consultation in social work the five respondents described their needs as follows:

- Consultation is needed for support and to broaden ones knowledge.
- Staff need to be equipped and empowered so as to perform well and experience job satisfaction.
- Ongoing performance evaluation and critical feedback.

- Provision must be made to identify, evaluate and address learning needs.
- The agency should have a policy regarding consultation and place greater emphasis on the value and utilisation of consultation.
- Consultation must always be available so as to assist staff in making important decisions and to take action when required.

These needs seem to indicate a direct relationship between the supervisors' level of training and experience and their adequate practice performance; while also acknowledging their needs for support and for manageable demands to be made on them.

6.10 SUMMARY

This Chapter assessed the data that was gathered from a small sample of respondents as regards to consultation for social work supervisors and their professional responsibilities. Respondents were appointed to their supervisory positions from direct service practice, because of their professional knowledge and expertise. Most respondents had received specific training for their roles as social work supervisors through, managerial courses included in post-graduate studies and in-service training.

The majority of respondents had difficulty initially with the practice of consultation, because significant shortcomings exist with regard to the knowledge and skills in the application of consultation in social work in the Department of Social Services. It was also found that existing agency policy should be amended or extended in order to address supervisors' needs regarding consultation in social work.

As regards to the needs of supervisors regarding consultation social work (p. 83), those needs seem to indicate a direct relationship between the supervisors' level of training and experience and their adequate practice performance; while also acknowledging their needs for support and for manageable demands to be made on them. The majority of respondents also considered the agency as the primary source for the provision of professional education i.e. consultation.

All respondents agreed that having in-depth knowledge about the consultation process would enable them to evaluate the extent wherein consultation progresses as a process,

in order to determine its effectiveness as an effective management tool for professional and agency development. The majority of respondents also experienced very real problems with the practice of consultation in social work which emanates from the selection and training of supervisors which is often inadequate, and resulting in a lack of understanding and a commitment to the practice of consultation, and undue demands made on supervisors, overloading them, which result in problems being experienced by both supervisor and social worker.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter will be firstly to highlight whether the research aims were achieved. Secondly conclusions will be drawn in response to the research questions which originally gave rise to this research. Finally, based on the conclusions drawn, appropriate recommendations will be made for further practice-research in the field of social work, and for proposed implementative action by the Department of Social Services.

The aims of the study were to investigate the nature and method of the existing support system i.e. consultation for social work supervisors within an organisational structure in fulfilling the supervisory function. As a result of the findings in the literature and empirical study, conclusions and recommendations will be made. Thereafter, guidelines for a system of consultation for social work supervisors will be proposed.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS

Consultation as one of the components of personnel development in social work contributes to effective service rendering as well as professional development. This study has shown that the social work supervisors were unfamiliar with the method and nature of the practice of consultation. The supervisors received little or no consultation and were expected to request on the job consultation which is accepted as an ineffective way of assessing their performance and progress.

The findings of the study have generally supported the statement, namely that if social work supervisors are receiving consultation on a regular basis, then they are able to fulfill the supervisory function effectively, which will be to the benefit of the organisation. These conclusions and resultant recommendations will be discussed.

7.2.1 Respondents to this survey

Respondents to this survey were selected with the objective of evaluating their knowledge and practice experience concerning consultation in social work in order that their valid and reliable contribution to this empirical investigation could be assured. As was to be expected, the Department's supervisory staff is comprised mostly of experienced females. The drastic reduction of male employees in the Department no doubt accounts for the relatively few male supervisors at the present time. This implies that an increasing number of women are likely to fill top management positions in the future.

Although supervision is considered a full-time responsibility, the existence of additional administrative responsibilities in conjunction with the dearth in supervisory education and training is likely to mitigate against the supervisor's ability to practice supervision of a high standard. Considering that the majority of supervisors subject to consultation at the time of this investigation experienced inadequate support, it is likely that their consultative needs were thus of a more intense nature. The need for consultation on an ongoing basis is very evident and that such consultation needs to be of a high quality is self-evident. This implies the need, once again, for consultation for supervisors.

The practice-expertise of supervisors is lost to direct-service work as a result of the poor support system. Two possible and related consequences of this poor support system are that the standard of service delivery and the status of the profession are adversely affected. There exists a need, therefore, for supervisors to have adequate support to be able to continue rendering effective services.

The important role, therefore, of the agency in either making it possible for supervisors and office heads to attend extra mural classes at universities or preferably to be granted formal in-service training for their education and management responsibilities is vital if a high standard of supervisory practice and office management is to be attained.

7.2.2 The practice of consultation in social work

Based on the findings, there is a need for adequate consultation in social work practice; but consultants ought to be suitably trained and experienced and not placed in a situation where they are overburdened with demands by consultees.

Similarly, the objectives of consultation will be met, and its functions will be implemented, provided consultants are appropriately trained, experienced in social work consultation practice, and are supported in successfully handling the demands made on them; even in the face of chronic personnel shortages.

Consultation takes place on two levels i.e. internal- and external consultation. The effectiveness and success of consultation in social work is influenced by the type of consultation utilised. External consultation is limited in the Department of Social Services due to the possible financial implications. Internal consultation is mainly utilised, where social workers are chiefly utilised for conducting internal consultation. These consultants in the social work service performs mostly a dual function i.e. that of practising social worker and consultant, which in particular places high demands upon them.

The effectiveness of consultation is also determined by the different forms of consultation applied. Based on the research findings it seems that only sufficient knowledge relating to the more familiar forms of consultation is utilised. This implies that training in consultation in the Department must be intensified in order to enhance the efficiency thereof.

Furthermore, based on the research findings, insufficient knowledge relating to the description and variety of approaches of consultation in social work exists in the agency. This causes confusion with similar processes in social work, which influence the effective utilisation of the process of consultation and the meaningful application thereof. This also results in service rendering being hindered as the idea of consultation as well as the knowledge of its total theoretical structure is inadequate.

The lack of knowledge relating to a clear definition of consultation in social work further results in confusion with other similar processes in social work which hampers service delivery. Subsequently skills in the utilisation of consultation become a great learning need. This unfamiliarity develops a lack of trust in the effectiveness of the process of consultation. Thus consultation consequently gets a very low priority and is perceived as secondary to the execution of tasks in the work plan.

Existing and new tendencies for current practice in consultation in social work i.e. support to supervisors from top management should be evaluated for effectiveness and suitability by the agency as a matter of urgency. Overall the philosophy and the prac-

tice of social work supervision are as relevant for consultation in social work, as they are in other social work methods. This is shown by the responses of social work supervisors involved in, and/or knowledgeable about supervision, when describing their experience from a supervisory frame of reference. However, adequate training in consultation in social work is judged to be essential for satisfactory practice performance.

7.2.3 Consultation in social work is seemingly not part of the agency's policy and procedures

Findings from the research showed that the existence or availability of a policy for consultation in social work is extremely limited. The nature of such a policy was also not very specific. Whilst no policy exists, it also appears that there are no guidelines according to which consultation should be conducted. This, once again, leads to ineffective service rendering to the client system.

The formulation of a policy – other words a written, sanctioned document relating to both internal and external consultation, can serve as a guide. This should also contribute to the prevention of uncertainties, confusion and problems with consultation in social work amongst workers.

Furthermore a policy for consultation will also broaden workers' knowledge of the agency and justify the effective application of consultation in the agency. If they are certain about how consultation should be utilised then their self confidence will be enhanced which will influence their skills and attitude positively towards the utilisation of consultation. This implies effective service rendering to the client system.

7.2.4 Problems encountered with consultation in social work

Based on the research findings it seems that respondents do encounter problems with the practice of consultation to such an extent that service rendering to supervisees is severely hampered.

The nature of the problems with the highest incidence, is vagueness relating to the definition of consultation in social work, uncertainty concerning the goals of consultation and inadequate training in consultation. This implies that the selection and training of supervisors is often inadequate, resulting in a lack of understanding and a commitment to the practice of consultation, as well as undue demands being made on super-

visors leading to overload which results in problems being experienced by both supervisees and supervisors.

The fact that the majority of respondents encounter problems with consultation confirms the existence of intense problems. This probably is related to the ignorance about and unfamiliarity with the process of consultation, the application thereof and the fact that consultation is a relatively unfamiliar concept to the agency.

Problems encountered in consultation can, however, gradually be lessened by the availability of adequate and appropriate consultation for supervisors and the support given to them. This will result in the supervisor's dedicated and motivated functioning.

7.2.5 Need for training in consultation in social work

The research findings showed that inadequate training in consultation is one of the primary problems, in fact it is the main area in which the majority of respondents indicated that it is a problem to them.

It seems that respondents would like to attend a formal training program, which could be conducted in the form of symposia, workshops, and conferences. This information is meaningful in terms of the needs for training in consultation which exists amongst the respondents of the study group involved in this research.

The respondents' expectations in relation to training programs; especially regarding to the knowledge relating to the theoretical structure of consultation in social work and the integration of the theory in practice, in other words the development of skills in the utilisation and application of consultation is a high priority to be addressed by the management of the Department.

However, consultation cannot and should not take place if the consultant displays inadequate knowledge of, skill in and the wrong attitude towards consultation in social work. Thus adequate training in and exposure to consultation is of extreme importance.

Furthermore the findings of this investigation on the one hand consistently confirmed the existence of limited knowledge of and skill in consultation. The incorrect attitude towards consultation and the need for consultation in social work feature to a great

extent amongst the respondents. On the other hand the objective to establish guidelines is paramount and is evident from the discussion contained in Chapter 5.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this research will in some way address both the agency involved, namely, the Department of Social Services (PAWC), as well as the social work profession with its needs for ongoing practice research, in a constantly changing environment.

The following recommendations can, therefore, be spelled out:

7.3.1 Social workers in the Department of Social Services ought not to be promoted/appointed to supervisory positions merely on seniority. Care should be taken to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to do the job and they should receive consultation on a regular basis by experienced social work managers. It is important to provide regular feedback or evaluation to social work supervisors in order for them to assess their performance and progress. Thus the supportive needs of supervisors must be catered to by the provision of regular scheduled, formal group/individual consultation sessions initiated by social work managers and comprise of supervisors and social work managers.

7.3.2 A written policy for consultation in social work for supervisors should be formulated in the Department of Social Services, which contained criteria and more elaborate procedures whereby social work supervisors should receive consultation. Aspects such as the allocation and utilisation of internal consultants as well as the utilisation of external consultants and the channels which ought to be followed, should also be included in its handbooks which will justify the execution of consultation.

7.3.3 In order to render more effective services to the client system, the acquired knowledge relating to consultation in social work needs to be integrated with practice in order to develop skills in the utilisation and application of consultation in social work. Thus practice skills relating to human relations, communication; and in particular to supportive leadership; to management; to the teaching of adults, should also be included into a continuous, well-planned formal in-service training programme provided by the Department of Social Services for its managers. Thus in-service training should be provided for supervisors as well as for social work managers which emphasises prac-

tice skills in relation to consultation. It should be aimed to improve the theoretical knowledge of the process of consultation in social work and to encourage practice in the steps of the consultation process and thus improve the skills in its implementation.

7.3.4 An increase in the practice of direct and informal communication is needed between social work managers and supervisors if consultation is to be experienced as positive by supervisors. A more worker, than task oriented approach to consultation is thus required if social work supervisors are to be motivated.

7.3.5 Social work supervisors should understand that the human, social and structural characteristics of the organisation are linked and that knowledge of the organisational structure will enable supervisors to function more effectively with regards to consultation. In order to perform the supervisory function effectively, supervisors need to understand the nature and method of consultation within an organisational structure.

7.3.6 The importance of consultation for social work supervisors is not fully realised. This research project was based on the opinions and the practice experience of a knowledgeable population, namely, social work supervisors. It is hoped that this research will, in some way, contribute to broader scientific research and will stimulate the development of an integrated approach for consultation in social work which can be utilised by the Department of Social Services to implement the suggested corrective actions in this regard, thereby enhancing staff moral and resultantly service to the clients system.

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ANNEXURE: 1

Department of Social Services

Enquiries : Mr Baardtman

Telephone : (021) 946-2600

Date : 25 March 1997

THE CHIEF DIRECTOR: SOCIAL SERVICES

(For attention: Dr F Maforah)

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE PART OF RESEARCH STUDY DURING
NORMAL WORKING HOURS**

1. Being an employee of this Administration and currently enrolled for post-graduate studies in Social Work at the University of Stellenbosch, there are certain requirements expected of all students enrolled for this Masters programme.
 - 1.1 One of the core requirements is that a mini research dissertation be undertaken and submitted by all students on this programme.
2. As will be noted this official in his working capacity at the rank of Senior Social Worker was responsible for the service field Alcohol and Drug Dependent Care in the Chief Directorate Social Services, prior to his transfer to the Directorate Social Development. During that work experience it has become evident that there is a great need for supervisors to keep up with the expectation of their subordinates; the reasons being amongst others:
 - 2.1 supervisors are unable to deal with subordinates anxieties, frustrations, etc. brought about by rapid socio-political and economic changes in the country. Coupled with that there are trends such as transformation, amalgamation, etc. which supervisors are unable to grapple with.
 - 2.2 the obscurity that exists about how consultation is experienced by social work supervisors within the Department.
 - 2.3 concerns that exists amongst subordinates in terms of expectations that the staff development function which includes orientation of new subordinates, in service-training, supervision and consultation cannot be met.
3. It is this scenario, which has given rise to the research which I will be undertaking. The proposed investigation will thus be aimed at determining the extent to which the present practice of the functions of consultation form the basis on which a system of consultation in the Department rests.
4. I am of the opinion that the best manner to provide a framework for a system of consultation, for effective utilisation by social work supervisors to address subordinates needs and frustrations so as to render effective services, would be by means of administering a questionnaire or interview schedule to four

offices of the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape based in the Cape Metropolitan area.

- 4.1 The proposed research topic will therefore be an investigation to determine the effectiveness of the existing system of consultation and to identify opinions and attitudes in this regard so as to provide a more detailed framework or structure for a system of consultation which will be utilised effectively and meaningfully by supervisors.
5. It is envisaged that the following offices will be interviewed due to the fact that staff of the service and regional offices in effect responsible is for the control and care function of the application of supervision and consultation:
 - Athlone office
 - Bellville office
 - Cape Town office
 - Wynberg office
- 5.1 This study will be limited to the middle management level i.e. supervisor and interviews will be conducted with at least two officials from each office.
6. It is envisaged that the proposed interviews with the above offices can be completed within four working days.
7. Permission is thus hereby requested to undertake the said interview during official working hours, under the auspices of the Administration and I will be greatly indebted if you would advise me before 30 April 1997 of your decision.
8. Your support and co-operation in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

DA BAARDTMAN
SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER

OM02a4VE

ANNEXURE 2

CONSULTATION SERVICES FOR SOCIAL WORK SUPERVISORS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES (PAWC) IN THE CAPE METROPOLE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Please note:

1. All information will be handled confidentially.
2. The interviewee will be anonymous.
3. All questions must be answered by marking an X where applicable.

Definition of terms:

1. Internal consultation implies consultation by an employee within the agency context.
2. External consultation implies consultation by somebody from outside the agency.
3. Reference to agency in context of this questionnaire implies to the service office.

I. NON-IDENTIFYING PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Gender of respondent:

Male	Female
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2. Age of respondent:

Under 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	Over 50
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3. Professional qualifications:

Diploma in social work (3 years)	
Higher diploma in social work	
BA (SW) degree (3 years)	
BA (SW) degree (4 years)	
BA (SW) (Hons.) degree in social work	
Advanced diploma in social work	
MA (SW) degree	
Any other qualifications (specify)	

4. Field of specialisation, if any:

5. What training have you had before your role as supervisor?

In-service training

Formal college e.g. Hugonote College etc.

University

None

Other (specify)

6. How many years have you held your present position at the welfare agency?

1 - 3 years

4 - 7 years

7 - 10 years

More than 10 years

7. How many social workers do you supervise?

8. (a) Do you have other professional responsibilities besides the supervision?

YES

NO

(b) If YES, please specify

.....

.....

II. SOCIAL WORK AND CONSULTATION

9. Explain how you understand the concept of consultation in social work?

.....

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.....

10. Are you aware of other explanations of this concept?

YES

NO

11. If YES, please explain?

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.....

.....

.....

12. In your experience have you made use of internal consultation in social work i.e. consultation by an employee within the agency context?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
-----	----	-----------

13. In your experience have you made use of external consultation in social work i.e. consultation by somebody from outside the agency?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
-----	----	-----------

14. Have you before your present position acted as a consultant in social work?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
-----	----	-----------

15. If YES, give details e.g. in a specialised field i.e. supervision or administration.

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.....

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III. POLICY AND CONSULTATION

16. Does your agency have a specific policy regarding consultation?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
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17. If YES, give an outline of the main aspects.

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.....

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18. If NO, give reasons for absence of a policy regarding consultation.

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19. Do you think your agency should have a policy re consultation?

YES

NO

Motivate your answer.

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.....

IV. UTILISATION OF CONSULTATION AND CONSULTANTS

20. Are you currently engaging the services of a consultant?

YES

NO

21. If YES, for what purposes.

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.....

.....

22. Does your agency provide the opportunity to develop you and your colleagues' skills and qualities in consultation in social work?

YES

NO

UNCERTAIN

23. If YES, what efforts have been made in this regard?

(a) Formal lectures

(b) In-service training

(c) Informal studying of literature

(d) Attending of workshops, symposiums and conferences

(e) Other (Specify)

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24. If formal lectures or in-service training have been utilised, explain the nature thereof.

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25. If NO or UNCERTAIN, does your agency plan to make training in consultation available or motivate you to utilise possible training opportunities within the next two years?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
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26. Who would you use as a consultant?

(a)	Internal consultants in social work	<input type="text"/>
(b)	Social work consultants from other agencies	<input type="text"/>
(c)	Internal consultants from another profession	<input type="text"/>
(d)	External consultants from another profession	<input type="text"/>

Motivate your answers:

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27. Does your agency provide you with the necessary consultation services when needed?

YES	NO
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28. If YES, please indicate the nature of such consultation?

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.....

29. If NO, do you think that your agency should provide the necessary consultation.

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
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30. If YES, indicate what you think the nature of such consultation should be.

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V. THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION

31. Do you use a process when conducting consultation?

YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
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32. If YES, briefly state the process that you utilised.

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33. If NO or UNCERTAIN, which of the following do you think should be included in the consultation process?

(a) Preparation	<input type="checkbox"/>
(b) Contracting	<input type="checkbox"/>
(c) Consultation interview(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
(d) Termination	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
(f) Other (specify)	

VI. FREQUENCY OF CONSULTATION

34. How often do you provide internal consultation?

- (a) Weekly
- (b) Fortnightly
- (c) Monthly
- (d) Quarterly
- (e) On request of the social worker
- (f) Other (specify)

35. How often does your agency make use of external consultation?

- (a) Weekly
- (b) Fortnightly
- (c) Monthly
- (d) Quarterly
- (e) On request of the social worker
- (f) Other (specify)

VII. PROBLEMS WITH CONSULTATION

36. Do you experience any problems with consultation?

YES	NO
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37. If YES, explain the type of problems you encounter?

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Motivate your answer:

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VIII. NEEDS REGARDING CONSULTATION IN SOCIAL WORK

38. Do you have any specific needs regarding consultation for your own usage?

YES	NO
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39. If YES, please indicate your needs regarding consultation:

.....

Motivate your answer:

.....

Thank you for your support